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PERMANENT UNEMPLOYMENT?

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THE FOOL, THE ATTENDANT LORD, AND THE VILLAIN KIRKPATRICK SALE

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NEWS & VIEWS

Pressuring Pacifists

The critical moment approaches for Peacemakers, the pacifist community that lives in the Gandhian tradition and proclaims a solidarity with the Catholic Worker movement.

In 1950, a number of Peacemakers, including Ernest and Marion Bromley, formed an international community and bought a small farm in Gano, Ohio, 20 miles north of Cincinnati. The group incorporated as Gano Peacemakers, Inc., and has dutifully paid property taxes on the farm.

At the same time, there is the Peacemaker Movement, quite a separate entity, which publishes a tri-weekly newsletter and which during the Vietnam war had a "Sharing Fund" that helped support, for the most part, dependents of draft and war resisters. About $100,000 has gone through the Sharing Fund.

In 1971, the IRS audited the Peacemaker Movement, declared Peacemakers a business and recipients of the Sharing Fund employees. The IRS slapped a lien on the farm in Gano, contending that Peacemakers and Ernest Bromley owed $25,000 in FICA taxes. Appeals to the IRS brought a revision in some earlier analysis, but not substantive reassessment in the amount owed. The farm was seized and sold at public auction last May 28. The Bromleys were given 120 days to vacate the premises, or until about Sept. 25. After that date, they, their friends and supporters will be legal trespassers on the property.

Peacemakers are now engaged in last-ditch maneuvers. They are leafletting Cincinnati and Washington, revisiting IRS officials, and attempting to persuade the farm's purchaser that he's involved in a mistake. They're also talking to people on Capitol Hill (on the not impossible notion that the action against them was of Nixonian, and therefore political, inspiration). They are prepared to do civil disobedience (sitting in) in the IRS federal building on Sept. 3. They expect to be joined that day by Dorothy Day, who has indicated that she will bring her chair and sit in with the demonstrators.

If all is to no avail, the Bromleys and company will stay on the Gano farm after Sept. 25. The issue then will be joined.

Art Loses Again

No publication is wringing its hands harder over the imminent emasculation of Villard Houses—the structure at 451-7 Madison Ave. that until recently housed the New York archdiocesan chancery—than *Park East*, a neighborhood New York weekly.

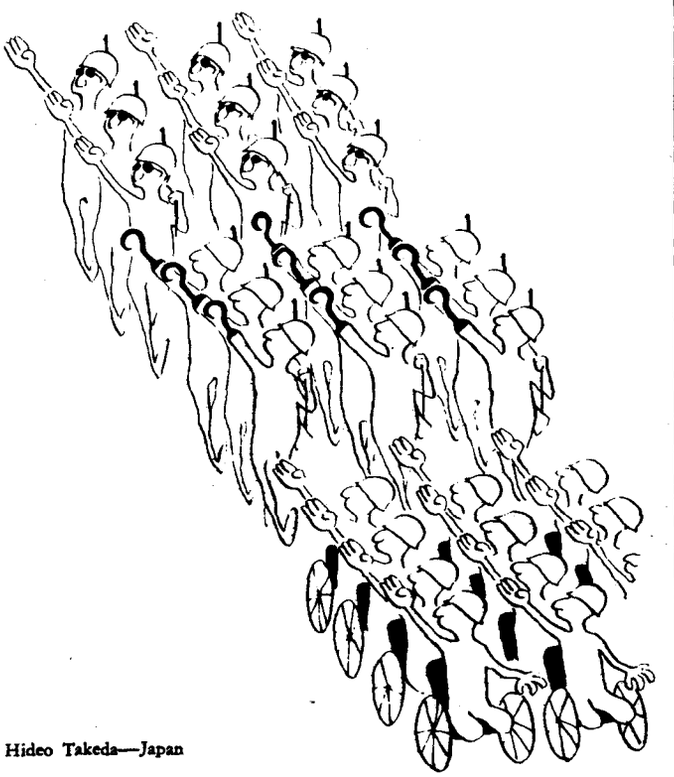
Important interiors, including the famous Gold Room, are to disappear in an architectural scheme that will preserve the facade and wings of the structure, but raise up from its rear a bronze, phallic hotel. It's a shotgun wedding of a New York landmark and New York schlock.

Park East quotes Msgr. Eugene Clark, archdiocesan director of communications, as saying that the archdiocese—sellers of the property to commercial interests—is willing to go to any lengths to preserve Villard Houses and has already gone to substantial trouble to save the buildings.

Emily Bouchard, director of Contemporary Christian Art, demurs. She told *Park East* that her organization, devoted to the creation and display of sacred art, had proposed in 1972 that the archdiocese convert Villard Houses into a museum of Christian art. The idea seemingly was rejected as economically unfeasible.

But "if it were put up as a museum, enough Christians would take care of it," Ms. Bouchard is convinced. "I could see it beautifully restored and keeping the elegant rooms. There are more important things in this world than just money. In New York we are destroying everything that's beautiful."

No one's expecting the archdiocese or developers to be persuaded by this logic. There will be a Villard shell, overwhelmed by a turgid New York Palace Hotel.



Hideo Takeda—Japan

Heavenly Tap Dance

Under the heading "Clear Days on the Theological Front," *The New Yorker* offers this sampling from the Worcester, Mass., *Evening Gazette*:

"Gary Arthur Smith, son of Arthur and Geraldine Smith of 72 Bull Run Circle, Holden, received the Tully Theology Award at a special ceremony Sunday.

"The cash award goes to the student who has written the best paper on a theological subject.

"Smith graduated magna cum laude with a bachelors' degree in theology and philosophy in three years. The title of his winning paper was 'Dance Pardner: The Dance of God and the Cosmic Clodhoppers—A Play Christology.'

"A graduate of Burncoat Senior High School in 1972, Smith plans to join a troupe of tap dancers."

Ole!

Odds and Ends

—The Diocese of Memphis' new weekly will debut in September with a name both Bicentennial and contemporary. It will be called *Common Sense*. Guiding light, presumably, will be less Citizen Paine than Citizen Dozier.

—Debuting in Saigon is a new Catholic daily, *Catholics and the Nation*. Nguyen Huu Tho, president of the National Liberation Front, recently indicated government willingness to allow a private press, provided it had not at any time collaborated with the Thieu regime. The Catholic daily was therefore brought back from Paris, where it was being published in Vietnamese.

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Appropriate Models?

Toronto, Ont.

To the Editors: James V. Schall's article, "The Dubious Existence of Europe" [June 20] contains many insights and much information, but the overall tone is one of deep regret that Europe refuses to follow the political-social model of the U.S.A. or perhaps the U.S.S.R. Are these countries really appropriate models for the emerging world? I suggest not:

(1) The concept of a sovereign national state, able to impose its will by force, is anachronistic in terms of modern weapons technology. Vietnam defeated France, then the U.S.A. Cuba threatened the destruction of Eastern U.S.A. and won its point. France or England could probably destroy much of the U.S.S.R., etc. These weapons are spreading everywhere and as Brezhnev recently suggested, this is only a modest foretaste of the scientific possibilities.

(2) From a social and human point of view, Europeans do not value the melting pot concept of the U.S.A. On the contrary, they could argue that the Negroes should be given self-determination in areas such as New York and the Mexicans in Southwestern U.S.A. In the modern world, the American Civil War for unity could be considered a colossal political blunder.

As for the Soviet Empire, created and held together by systematized terror, the basic feeling is one of contempt—for the Empire, not the people—and one must doubt its durability. Certainly this unitary state is not valued by Latvians, Poles, Hungarians or Czechs.

(3) In a world where every group or "nation" will apparently have the power to destroy everyone else—and the notion of restricting these powers to a few great souls like Kissinger or Brezhnev, is hardly acceptable to free man, also impractical in a world of total scientific communication—it seems

(Continued on page 383)

NEWS & VIEWS: **354** ***CORRESPONDENCE:*** **355**
EDITORIAL: **355**
WASHINGTON REPORT: Progress and Paralysis: *Sisyphus* **356**
KEEPING ROME LIVABLE: *Peter Freiberg* **357**
PERMANENT UNEMPLOYMENT?: *Steven Philip Kramer and Leo Friedmann* **360**
'WHAT I THINK ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH': Zacheus in the Sycamore: *Michael A. Burr* **363**
PRESS: The Problem with Facts: *Thomas Powers* **366**
THE SCREEN: *Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.* **368**
THE FOOL, THE ATTENDANT, THE VILLAIN: *Kirkpatrick Sale* **369**
EDMUND WILSON: THE PRIVATE SIDE: *Janet Groth* **371**
BOOKS: *Ivan Sanders, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Ronald Christ, Phillip Corwin, David S. Toolan, John Druska, Jean Bethke Elshtain,* **373**
ILLUSTRATIONS: *Front cover:* Action/LNS

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THE MISSING MEN

The mysteries of the two very different missing men, 62-year-old James R. Hoffa and 21-year-old Samuel Bronfman II, that have captured public attention during the past several weeks, have combined elements of potential personal tragedy and summer media entertainment.

Ironically, the disappearance and kidnapping have coincided with the new literary and cinema vogue for fictional private eyes and gang lords, as if, with the damaged reputations of the police and FBI, these amoral, pragmatic rationalists and entrepreneurs were to replace the cowboy, doctor and banker as folk heroes.

But, aside from challenging editors to come up with headlines like "Say Hoffa Was Set to Squeal" and "Family Gets Tapes from Sam," and catalogues of similar disappearances and crimes—Patricia Hearst, J. Paul Getty III, John J. Teich, Barbara Jane Mackle, Joe Bonanno and Judge Crater—these cases dramatize the increasing criminalization of American life and raise other questions, perhaps best answered by novelists and filmmakers, about a society where "success," violence and the craving for quick money seem more than ever locked in a lovers' *menage à trois.*

The Hoffa case touches every Teamster who shares in the pension funds that have cemented the marriage between the union and the mob through loans to mob-controlled country clubs, resorts and casinos, and every rival worker or employer intimidated by Teamster thugs. If Hoffa is dead—perhaps murdered by rival forces within his own union who feared his return to power, or by gangsters settling an old score or guaranteeing his silence—it will be an end consistent with the violent life pattern he set thirty years ago, which brought him "success" and political power, including premature release from prison by President Nixon.

Popular literature has told this story several times—the American dream gone sour, the original idealism of the labor movement corrupted by greed,

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power, devouring itself, "successful" men who bedeck their Miami hideaways with the trappings of gentility and communicate with one another by blowing up each other's automobiles.

The Bronfman case, which has been solved with the help of some luck, touches every family of even moderate wealth vulnerable to the new popular crime of the '70s. Kidnapping has become the make-it-big-quick gamble, as if all life were a night in Las Vegas. When they write about the Bronfman case, however, it will be about the convergence of two worlds: the first world of a multi-million dollar whiskey executive with two failed marriages and a third interrupted by an abduction; an unpretentious son who usually wore blue-jeans, T-shirt and sneakers, who dined with his father and lived with his mother; an obsession with privacy and a Fifth Avenue penthouse and well-hidden Westchester estate to protect it. This world invaded by the world of two middle-class immigrant Irishmen from Brooklyn, men who had reportedly planned the caper for two years—one who liked to watch "Jeopardy" on TV with the boys at the firehouse; the other, cheerful "like a Leprechaun," who neither smoked nor drank, and whose parish priest heard of his arrest in time to include him in the Prayers of the Faithful at the 11 o'clock mass. And all they wanted was a million dollars each to spend.

WASHINGTON REPORT

PROGRESS AND PARALYSIS

The Congress is now standing in its customary recess this month of August. The Gang, that occasionally is showing it *can* shoot straight, is variously embarked on familial and official excursions.

During the week immediately preceding the recess, the Congress approved a seven-year extension of the Voting Rights Act—with improvements. The Senate unexpectedly defeated a compromise $31 billion military procurement bill on grounds the military departments, as well as the civilian departments of the federal governments, should learn to live within our means of financing them. Offsetting this, the Senate conceded its prolonged failure under its Constitutional power to decide whether John Durkin or Louis Wyman had won the disputed senatorial election in New Hampshire nine months ago. In addition, the Senate unsatisfactorily dealt with an exciting military embargo against Turkey by prolonging it—an action susceptible of causing us difficulties with other nations which have allowed us to maintain military bases on their territories.

The House of Representatives, "The Other Body" showing it also could shoot straight, dealt President Ford a constructive setback just prior to the recess when a bi-partisan majority voted that raising oil prices, even gradually, is not a fair way of dealing with whatever "shortages" of petroleum products are said to exist currently or next Winter. However, the Congress has devised no sensible alternatives and the federal energy administrator, Frank Zarb, was left for awhile to consult with Adam Smith's shades as to what to do next, because President Ford had already left the country on a circuitous journey into Europe that ultimately took him to Helsinki, meeting place of something called the European Conference on Security and Cooperation. There he, among appropriate officials from approximately three-dozen nations, signed a declaration, one of whose principle articles, in effect, accepts admissibility of acquisition of territory by force—that is, if it is done by a Grand Bear, such as the Soviet Union, and not by a harassed Cub, such as Israel.

In addition to the Congress and, for the most part, the President, the Supreme Court is in recess and tens of thousands of federal employes of all ranks have also left town on vacation. Not, of course, that the world has stopped while Washington gets off during the month of August:

- The CIA was fingered as a motivating force in plots to kill off Cuban Premier Fidel Castro. ("How do you do it? You take notes?" Senator Church of Idaho commented to a Mafia-type witness, John Roselli, who had demonstrated a remarkable memory about attempts by the CIA to bring about the assassination of Castro. "No, sir. Just cash," Roselli replied.)
- Jimmy Hoffa's disappearance was unresolved into mid-August. Without clues, police turned to the Mafia for information, but apparently didn't ask CIA Director Colby for help.
- Alumni of the CIA were revealed to be employed at the federal budget office, where they determine how much money the CIA should be allocated each year.
- President Ford's campaign manager was trying to maneuver Vice President Rockefeller into position so a political trap door could be sprung under him in order to satisfy the Reaganite primitives in the Republican party.
- Around the country, federal judges were issuing public-school desegregation orders to take effect next month and local police departments, in response, were readying their riot guns.
- The Agriculture Department appeared to have not come clean (again) as to just how much grain the Soviet Union plans to buy in the United States this year—it

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may exceed the troublesome 19-million tons purchased on the sly three years ago.

• Agitprop attorneys seemed more intent on making a martyr of Joan Little rather than in creating a climate in Raleigh, N.C., within which a jury could acquit her of causing the death of her molester, a jailer, when he visited her cell.

• The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court re-instated Alger Hiss to the practice of law—certainly heartening news to the gaggle of Nixon-administration lawyers disbarred, or about to be, or who withdrew from the bar, as did Nixon, now beginning to show signs of restlessness at his St. Helena in California.

• An ice-cream manufacturer was indicted on grounds of knowingly selling tainted Good Humors and transplanted Bostonians joined the ones in-place to light candles as the Red Sox ball club showed hauntingly familiar signs of blowing a big lead in the American League's Eastern Division. It may be necessary to light all the candles in Notre Dame Cathedral to save the Red Sox (and solve the other problems described herein).

Or, perhaps if we run out of cathedrals and candles, the month of August will be "the pause that refreshes." It's doubtful.

There is a strong tendency both in the presidency and the Congress to sing along with Henry Gibson, the bantam-rooster king of country and western music in the movie *Nashville*—we must have done something right to last two hundred years. This long, long motion picture, in a format reminiscent of *Grand Hotel*, is a story of events arising out of an effort of several days to organize a musical political rally at the "Parthenon" in Nashville, the country/western capital, for a Wallace-type presidential candidate of the "Replacement party." It deserves attention, even if one doesn't (1) accept Pauline Kael's description—"the finest motion picture ever made in this country"—or (2) that it is an accurately pessimistic definition of the country on the eve of its Bicentennial observance. For one thing, Robert Altman, producer-director, insists on an imbalance by not including a scene at a location symbolizing some of the healthier aspects of American democracy—at Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage, only 12 miles east of Nashville. On the other hand, it is not, as strict-constructionists insist, an up-dated *Ziegfeld Follies* movie that displays again the shabbiness of show business—promoters, financiers and players.

No, *Nashville* has something larger than that to say. Evolutionists believe that the door to the past swings really in one direction—that man can not "pass back." But, politically, this need not apply. The Ford administration is a right-wing manifestation. Strange compromises are in the air as big economic interests sense new directions and seek to adjust. The Supreme Court, should the ailing, elderly Justice Douglas choose or be forced to resign, would not be an impediment to realignments. On many social issues, it is now only one vote from being hospitable (juridically, of course) to rightward changes. This disposition would be enhanced, if, as is being rumored, someone along the lines of Carla Hills, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, were nominated to replace Douglas. Naturally, President Ford would seek to distract from her severely conservative views by "pointing with pride" to her's being the first nomination of a woman.

These days, moderates and liberals in the Congress seem to drift—distracted, unorganized, in disarray, even confused. Some newly elected liberals seem to be throwbacks to an earlier period when liberals were strong in defense of the Bill of Rights, but laissez faire in respect to economics. It may be a misjudgment, but organized labor appears to be almost held in disrespect, or, at a minimum, held at arm's length among front-benchers and back-benchers customarily friendly.

And, consequently, as changes percolate within and without Washington, one worries: Will the Tories, in company with the members of the "Replacement party," born of the Americanization of George Wallace, re-design America unchallenged? SISYPHUS

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THE BIG PIZZA

KEEPING ROME LIVABLE

The thousands of Italians and foreigners who flocked to the annual *Festa di Noiantri* in Rome's colorful Trastevere section found something new amidst the gaily-festooned streets this year. In the Piazza of S. Maria in Trastevere was a small exhibit, manned by a group of young people and consisting of about 20 attractively mounted cardboard pieces, each stating in a few words a problem faced by the neighborhood: rising rents, the growing number of evictions to make way for Americans and other foreigners who can pay more, the closing of small shops due to higher rents and inflation, crowded schools, joblessness among youths and a lack of recreational facilities.

Many of those who viewed the exhibit appeared surprised at the extent of the neighborhood's problems. This in itself should not be startling. The image

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of Rome as an "Eternal City," which conjures up an image of a religious and cultural entity in which the real problems of everyday life seem insignificant, is deeply ingrained. Moreover, while even tourists suffer severe inconveniences in Rome, the historic center, which includes such landmarks as the Seven Hills, the Spanish Steps, the Piazza Navona, the Vatican and Trastevere, appears to be in good shape.

High rises have not intruded into the center as in London and Paris, old buildings are being renovated rather than demolished, transportation is cheap and markets like the Campo di Fiori appear to be thriving. Violence, and the consequent fear that has had such a devastating effect on American cities, are rare occurrences. Life in Rome clearly has its pleasant aspects.

Nevertheless, Rome is in deep trouble—not only in the center, where 300,000 people live, but even more seriously in the outlying areas that contain 90 percent of the city's population of three million. It is, as Peter Nichols put it in his recent book, *Italia, Italia,* undoubtedly "the worst administered city on the mainland." And at the end of the post-World War II economic boom, problems that remained hidden—and unresolved—for years are now being spotlighted.

Last year, Italia Nostra, Italy's major environmental and urban preservation organization, published *Roma Sbagliata* ("The Mistakes of Rome"), a compilation of opinions by 30 architects, urban sociologists, doctors and other professionals that drew widespread publicity. Early this year, Cardinal Ugo Poletti, the Pope's Vicar of Rome, convened a conference to focus on the city's problems. Undoubtedly, part of the impetus for introspection on the part of civic and religious leaders arises from the 1975 Holy Year, when several million additional tourists are thronging Rome, giving a needed boost to the economy but taxing the city's already severely strained facilities.

A glance at some of the statistics brought out in the Italia Nostra volume and at the Church-sponsored conference indicates the extent of the city's needs. At least 50,000 people continue to live in shacks or caves, lacking even the most basic amenities. An estimated 1000 more kindergartens and 3000 new elementary school classrooms are required. Rome reports more cases of typhoid fever than the whole United States. There is what Cardinal Poletti called an "absurd" rate of infant mortality, estimated at 26 per thousand. Motor traffic, despite the limited curbs downtown, continues to strangle the city, contributing to a carbon monoxide level six times the health hazard limit. Half the children have physical malformations because of the lack of parks and recreational facilities.

The reasons for Rome's deterioration—and virtually anyone who has lived there for any length of time agrees that the quality of life has gone steadily downhill—are not difficult to find. A key factor is the population growth. In 1940, there were one million people in Rome; by 1951, this had risen to 1.7 million, a figure that has almost doubled in the intervening 23 years.

This growth reflects the vast internal migration that has occurred in Italy since the war, with up to 10 million farmers leaving their land for the cities. A portion of these migrants was attracted to Rome despite the fact that the city has little industry: like many national capitals, it relies for jobs primarily on the government bureaucracies, banks, communications, transportation, retailing and tourism. Even during the prosperous 1950s and '60s. some of these newcomers had difficulty finding work; with the drastic decline in construction in the 1970s, unemployment has increased sharply and inflation, estimated at 22 percent this year, has caused additional hardship.

The burgeoning population needed places to live, which neither the city nor national government appeared willing or able to provide. Instead, the job was given to the speculators, with results that have been disastrous, in physical as well as human terms. Private builders, abetted by corrupt government officials, violated the laws to put up row after row of high-rise, project-type housing in outlying districts that was not only aesthetically unattractive but left hundreds of thousands of working-class and middle-income people paying a great deal to live in developments that lacked even a semblance of public facilities and services.

A particularly horrendous example is the Magliana district, which tourists pass when traveling along the Tiber to Fiumucino Airport. About 100 buildings were put up here in the late 1960s by developers who broke virtually every provision of the city's safety, zoning, building and health codes. Roads were left unpaved, schools and open space not provided, land below the Tiber embankment was not filled in as required, buildings were constructed way over the height limit and a central sewer system was not built, causing the area to be flooded for days after a rain.

Apartments in Magliana and similar private developments have frequently stayed vacant for months or years because of a scarcity of people who can afford them. Hundreds of these apartments have been invaded by squatters from nearby shantytowns who remain until they are evicted. In some cases, bureaucratic bungling in the assignment of publicly-built low-rent housing has led to similar squatting tactics. Last September, a 19-year-old boy was killed and several dozen civilians and police injured when police forcibly removed squatters from 148 apartments in the San Basilio district five miles from Rome's center. The city had allowed the families to remain in the apartments illegally for 10 months, but eviction orders were obtained when officials finally decided to turn the apartments over

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to the families to whom they had originally been assigned.

The labor unions have made a rational housing policy a prime demand. Similarly, Italia Nostra has called for a cessation of all private building on still vacant sites, a vast construction program of low-cost public housing on suitable locations and rehabilitation work in the historic center. There has, in fact, been a significant amount of rehabilitation in Trastevere and other downtown areas, but not with the purposes Italia Nostra has in mind.

What has been happening is that real estate corporations have purchased buildings, evicting tenants who were paying low rents for years and renovating the buildings for offices or expensive apartments. On one level, this renovation of old buildings helps to preserve the physical appearance of the center. But, as Armando Montanari, an architect who does consulting work for Italia Nostra, points out, "Many of the low-income people, the artisans and the market people, who live and work in the center are being forced out."

When questioned about the grim realities of life in Rome, officials assert the municipality lacks two elements required for constructive changes—money and power.

There is, of course, some truth in this defense. Rome's accumulated debts are so huge that the city has virtually ceased paying interest on its loans. Given Italy's overcentralized system, the capital is even more subject to national influence—critics would say interference—than other cities. The national government, and especially the swollen bureaucracy that rules in the absence of strong Parliamentary authority, controls most of the purse strings; money allocated for public investment frequently doesn't get spent because of red tape. The breakdown in postal services, the hospital system and the universities, which critically affects the daily lives of Romans, cannot be blamed on the local government.

But the city's government is neither totally penniless nor totally powerless. In areas where it does exercise control, as in zoning, it has built up what Poletti described as a "negative record." Much of the blame must be placed on the Christian Democrats, who control the center-left coalition that has governed Rome in recent years. Divided themselves, and unwilling to share power with the Communists, the second largest municipal party, they are the major contributors to the City Council's vacillation. This lack of positive political direction has turned Rome into a mirror image of the national government, with the civil service triumphant again and exhibiting the same kind of unaccountability and corruption so common at the national level.

Nor do Romans have to look very far to find evidence that a municipality can be governed with reasonable efficiency. Communist-run Bologna, which admittedly has a much smaller population and fewer problems than Rome, is nevertheless generally acknowledged to be the best-governed large city in the country. While this is hardly a great compliment, there is little doubt that Bologna's transportation system, decentralized planning, day care centers, large school budget (25 percent of total expenditures as compared to 8 percent for Rome) and responsive civil service owe much to a competent, honest administration in City Hall.

Whether Rome changes course would appear to depend on the amount of pressure generated by the national government, the Church—which continues to wield great power—and the *Romani* themselves.

Parliament, itself paralyzed by constantly changing Cabinets, is the least likely of the three to offer any impetus for reform. Cardinal Poletti's conference was virtually an admission that the Popes, in their capacity as Bishop of Rome, have not played a positive role in their own backyard. Despite the conference, there are few signs that the Vatican intends to back up its stated concern with concerted action, such as pledges not to sell the many downtown buildings it owns to speculators. Nor is there any indication that the Vatican intends to back off from its unequivocal support for the Christian Democrats, the party responsible for the backward social policies that the Church deplores.

Clearly, the major spur to stem Rome's decline will have to come from its own citizens. In Rome, as in other Italian cities, activism has traditionally concentrated on national rather than local issues through labor unions and political parties. The national focus is reinforced by the media, which provide little sustained local coverage. In recent years, however, this focus has begun to shift slightly as a growing number of neighborhood *comitati* have been organizing to make demands on City Hall.

Partly in response to this pressure, the politicians took a step toward making civil servants and elected officials more accountable to neighborhood residents by dividing the city into 20 *circoscrizioni*, or local districts. Many community activists and preservationists are convinced that a much more radical decentralization is needed. "There must be a real transfer of power to local residents," said Montanari, as at least a partial answer to the central administration's inefficiency and lack of direction. Since City Hall has no intention of surrending voluntarily any substantial powers, it will have to be forced to do so from below.

At the present time, many Romans seem apathetic and somewhat despairing. But the efforts that have been building up in more and more sections of the city—as evidenced by, among others, the Magliana committee, the Trastevere youths, even businessmen on the Via Veneto pressing for more city services—are hopeful indicators that not all Romans are resigned to accepting their city's modern decline and fall without a fight.

PETER FREIBERG

(Peter Freiberg, a New York Post *reporter specializing in urban affairs, is a frequent visitor to Rome.)*

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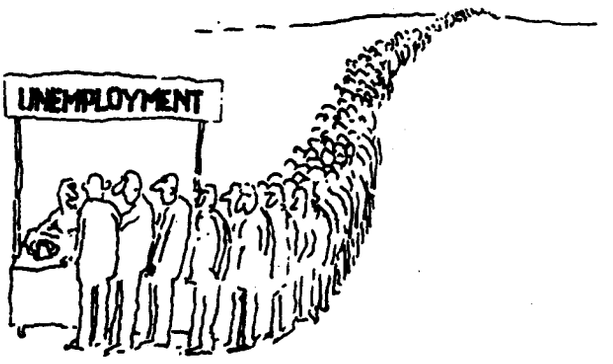
PERMANENT UNEMPLOYMENT?

STEVEN PHILIP KRAMER and LEO FRIEDMANN



The economy is showing the strain of monopolistic decision-making

The depth and duration of the present economic crisis continues to defy our imaginations. "Bottoming out" has become a myth, the "cyclical" movement of the "market mechanism" expected to take care of the problem has taken care of nothing. Unemployment continues to rise, and prices move upwards by fits and starts, refusing to stabilize themselves.

Ironically, the crisis seems to have spared, for the time being, large segments of the public. U.S. society is still based on "consumerism"—at least for those "middle class" people with a stable income. But the economy is beginning to show the stress and strain of monopolistic decision-making. The market mechanism cannot operate, self-regulation cannot take place, in an increasingly organized and centralized "command economy."

The economic scene is full of surprises, not only for the administration, but also for business itself. For instance, the recent all-out sale of inventories, which led to a rising demand for durable goods, went hand in hand with continuing, if not increasing, fall in the rate of profit. There's an enigma for you. Business turns out to be good, but profit declines. Whatever the reasons (and we shall come to them later on), the result is rather discouraging. The "profit-motive" for business expansion is all well and good—as long as it works; i.e., as long as it operates "automatically" through the "self-regulation" of the market. But what happens when public subsidies and price commands fail?

Washington policy-makers justify their energy policy of higher oil prices and deregulation by the prospects of "energy independence." One thing is certain—this policy will increase profits for the oil cartel. It's far from clear that this incentive will do any good, that more and more consumer sacrifices, increasing stimulation from the top and subsidies will lead to capital investment. The unwillingness of capital owners to invest is the root of the problem.

This is even more true for metals, automobiles and garments (and textiles in general) than it is for the oil industry, where the level of technology is relatively high. Naturally, excess profits are always welcome, whether they come from the administration or from investment in underdeveloped countries where wages are lower. But the lack of enthusiasm for reinvesting these excess profits in the U.S. economy has become notorious.

These observations, which can be obtained by reading the newspapers and perusing profit and loss statements, should give rise to a more sophisticated kind of crisis analysis. They should suggest that the persistence of such crisis symptoms as increasing inflation and unemployment have structural causes. Ironically, rather than provoking serious consideration, the crisis has provoked an efflorescence of silly fantasizing by conservative extremists about the need for deregulation. If you listen to Messrs. Goldwater and Reagan, you would think that the same government which pumps billions into the pockets of corporations is the greatest obstacle to economic recovery (read, business affluence). But despite the advice of Milton Friedman (the greatest economist of this age, according to Arthur Schlesinger), the federal government has not been abolished. And as long as it remains in business, it might as well have a policy.

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29 August 1975: 360

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II.

Logically, a more organized and "ordered" economy should be less prone to deepening economic disorders than a "free" economy. This is not the case, although it is true that the post-war economy in the industrialized world has been spared, so far, a crisis of the dimensions of the Great Depression.

One reason why such a crisis has not yet occurred is the rationalization and organization of the industrial world: since 1946, new levels of exchange, a growing interdependence, and a more coordinated command of the industrial economy have indeed brought about a new affluence—to a degree, of course, at the cost of leaving the less developed parts of the world behind. The expansion of new markets for industrial finished commodities has found its limits, just as the possibility of acquiring cheap raw materials from the developing world.

But this is only one of the reasons for the recession, and not the most important. The strange polarization between developed and underdeveloped worlds might prove a barrier for the extension of such newly organized and technologically advanced societies as Germany and Japan. But even these two industrial giants have exchanged commodities mainly with each other and with other industrialized nations like France and the U.S. In fact, the shrinking market for consumer goods in the U.S. is one of the main reasons for the recession in Germany and Japan.

The U.S. is in a key position. Not only did it absorb many goods from other industrial countries, but it also absorbed a great portion of the raw materials of the developing nations. Thus we cannot just place the burden of failure for the recession on the deficiencies of the world economic mechanism. We must also ascertain the specific causes for the American crisis. And here again, we must ask in particular whether the falling rate of profit (we disregard such purely political phenomena as "windfall profits") and the growing rate of unemployment are interrelated, and what their relationship might be.

Even the administration in Washington admits that it is rather helpless in the face of growing unemployment. But why? If it is true that the recession is bottoming out (if not today, then perhaps tomorrow?) and that price stability is in the offing, why shouldn't a prospering market-oriented economy and extended production provide more jobs?

In the first place, the administration admits that it cannot provide a statistically relevant picture of actual unemployment, and that it must rely on data obtained in the labor market (those who are looking for employment day by day). Thus, it differentiates between visible and invisible unemployment. Visible unemployment will not be, and is not limited to the 7-8 percent the administration projects—in this category we must count 12-13 percent of the work force. The invisible component is open to speculation, and may constitute another 12 percent, with an especially high number of blacks, particularly, black youths.

In the old jargon, the unemployed were characterized as an "industrial reserve army"; i.e., a group exerting pressure to lower wages for the employed but ultimately to be reintegrated into the productive process within an expanding economy. At the present moment, the pressure on wages is less relevant; on the contrary, the unionized sector of the employed tends to become a privileged group which holds on to its wage level, and sees itself increasingly as separate from the unemployed. (Ironically, only in the public sector does the sword of unemployment hang over those still employed.)

New Element

One of the reasons, often hidden, for the prevailing pessimism about rising unemployment is technological. That is, the government and the corporations don't seem to believe that a technologically more inventive organization of production will be able to absorb a large number of presently unemployed workers. This is not readily admitted, but can be inferred from the projection of high unemployment.

There is a decidedly new element in this general pessimism about employment. During previous crises and recessions the expectation was that an expanding economy would *overcompensate* for technological displacement. In fact, that is the history of the capitalist-industrial epoch.

That this historic lesson is being abandoned is in many respects a particularly interesting sign of the times. And it is most characteristic of the U.S. In Japan, for instance, where big industry is technologically more advanced than in the U.S., industry has up to this time maintained its employment levels (although in less organized sectors unemployment seems rampant if hidden). In Great Britain, where technology lags, unemployment figures are much smaller than the actual level of production justifies. Germany, technologically perhaps the most advanced, complains about high unemployment (although the figures are much lower than in the U.S.) but treats the unemployed, particularly German workers, not much differently from the employed, at least financially.

The really sharp division between employed and unemployed, the near polarization, is perhaps our own unique characteristic, exacerbated by the "racial" peculiarities inherent in our social fabric. And this in the face of the fact that U.S. industry has not yet, at least not across the board, brought into being the technological renovation and rejuvenation which alone might secure for it the first place in the world which its material and political weight demands (and perhaps inherently must

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demand). But transformation to a higher technological level has barely started.

Although the immediate threat to the wage level of the employed by the unemployed does not appear immediate, the problem is different when seen in the global perspective: the low wages paid by U.S. capital in the underdeveloped countries are indeed a vast incentive for U.S. capital in its notorious flight into these less-developed areas. In fact, the flight into Hong Kong, and into Taiwan, where masses of people (including children) work for U.S. corporations for two dollars a day (and in Seoul and Jakarta, for maybe less) is the other side of the flight from the new technology. The investment by conglomerates in these low-wage regions is actually not an investment in modern technology (as some have claimed). The typical work layout there is a clearcut assembly line; that is, the breaking up of the labor organization into small and precise working details. That is the case even if the most refined electronic equipment is concerned. The skill of the people working there is their unusual discipline which makes working habits mechanical and easily controllable. New technology, on the other hand, is characterized by automated computerized apparatus or machinery, which makes mass effort and mechanical unskilled "discipline" superfluous.

There are many voices being raised accusing U.S. industry and the big corporations of technological laxity and lack of inventiveness. One wonders, however, whether these critics are fully aware of the implications of their own advocacy of new technology. First of all, one must question whether historical "overcompensation," the reintroduction of the "displaced" workers into the productive process will repeat itself. Indications are that it will not. From what can be seen in a number of newly organized "factories" all over the world, the worker in the traditional sense is replaced by the operator, who controls and manipulates a complex of automated machines without much help from workers.

The industrial age started in English factories in which unskilled expropriated peasants were exploited en masse. Later on, more and more skills, derived from handicrafts and assimilated to the machine, were demanded. Finally, only the skill of disciplined behavior was actually employed in mass production(this is, of course, a schematic outline). The typical skills of today's operator seem to be precise observation, flexibility, and mental awareness.

We have used this unsatisfactory survey of the working process merely to illustrate one point: that *a new wave of expanded production, based on new technology, cannot be expected to solve unemployment.* But there is one fact even more relevant in this connection: *our entrepreneurs (corporation managers) seem not in the least anxious to introduce the new technology on any meaningful scale!* They claim they lack capital. But they know as well as we do that for effective "American leadership" to occur, a process of capital formation in this country must take place to establish the dominance of the new technology.

Let us not imagine that our corporate leaders are bothered by the fact that millions will remain unemployed even if their businesses bloom. What bothers them, really, is that even a colossal outlay of capital may not bring enormous profits. Any thorough statistical analysis will show that industries with a high degree of technical rationalization suffer from a relatively low or tendentially falling rate of profit. Investment in developing or primitive environments, with mass employment of low-paid workers and low technology, results in higher earnings.

We are not out here to prove the validity (or failure) of the "law of the tendential fall of the rate of profit" derived from Adam Smith and Ricardo and refined and completed by Marx. But it is a rather important coincidence that this "law" has been borne out here. Many modifications and regressions were noted by Marx himself. For instance, he predicted that a "command price" or cartelization would be one response of the capital owners: by taking the price mechanism out of the market structure and subjecting it to the arbitrary powers of the capital conglomerate, they would weaken or neutralize the fall of profit.

This "law," to make a long story short, is based on the fundamental insight that profit derives from the exploitation of human work. As long as the "combination of capital" remains low (that is, the percentage invested in wages is high in comparison with machines), profits can be expected to proliferate; as the combination of capital becomes higher, a larger percentage being invested in machinery, profits tend to fall. Naturally, low wages are part of the arrangement, and machinery itself is part of accumulated wages. Nevertheless, profits in a highly developed industrial environment have a tendency to become lower.

Consequently, the appetite of the corporations for new capital investment has been shrinking—despite the fact that they have partially succeeded in dictating price levels and freeing them from the control of the "free market mechanism." It must also be recognized that the massive introduction of the new technology promises to be very expensive. You can "entice" them, subsidize them, give them plenty of incentives, but you can hardly guarantee them high profits. One might safely predict that only if American corporations succeeded in dominating world markets and could eliminate or control most of their industrial competitors could the colossal outlays for the new technology pay for themselves.

III.

Regardless of whether the falling rate of profit is a mere coincidence or a validation of the principle, all the evidence, and the conduct of the government itself

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shows, that unemployment is here to stay. The number of unemployables will continue to grow. Today, a majority of the visible unemployed might still hope to return "soon" to jobs. The majority of the invisibles have already concluded that they will never again find regular employment.

If our short analysis is correct, even approximately, a majority of both visible and invisible unemployed will never be integrated into the regular productive process. On the contrary, the number of those left at public disposal will increase. In that case, a social dilemma of the greatest proportion will unfold in the next decade.

One can always make a good case for extending unemployment benefits another year (even if many of the unemployed never have or presently don't receive such benefits). The "liberal" Democrats are always willing to renew the NRA or deal with the problem through public works. But aside from the enormous problem of public financing, there are other obstacles today which didn't exist in the 1930s. Public employees fear the competition of the unemployed in their domain. Minimal wages might prove unacceptable today, etc. The problem is more complicated, more enveloping. One only has to think of how all this relates to the problem of the cities.

The fundamental question is whether this social system can deal with the problems of the post-industrial world. The corporate leaders are skeptical about the future. The managers, agents and bureaucrats of the "establishment," shortsighted as they are, encounter a tragic alternative: either to deal constructively with the problems of enduring mass unemployment, or, as they are doing today, just letting things drift. They tell the cities and the most industrialized parts of the country to go to hell. That prospect may be nearer than they think. What does it really mean to isolate the cities and let them rot? That's a question no one wants to face. But it won't disappear by itself. Perhaps revealing these sorts of alternatives is the precondition for rallying the social forces necessary for beginning to come to terms with the future.

'What I think about the Roman Catholic Church'

Third in a Series

ZACHEUS IN THE SYCAMORE

MICHAEL A. BURR

When I was a boy, the Presbyterians taught me that the Catholics were pagans, or nearly so. They also taught me that pagans were bad people. The Catholics, themselves, were formidable. I shall never forget the day Dick Panichi convinced me that I most certainly would go to Hell because I was not Roman Catholic. At first I stood up for the Presbyterians; I argued. But Dick was much better catechized than I, and finally I ran home crying (the Presbyterians had told me all about Hell) to a mother who patted me, and soothed me in the only religious language a child can understand.

Everyone admitted that the students at St. Joseph's had a rough life in many ways. They had to worship statues every day and couldn't eat meat on Fridays, and so on, but they were awfully good basketball players, and it used to cause me considerable discomfort when they would cross themselves before each free-throw. Whether they made the shot or missed I could never decide if God had voted for their side or mine. (Is Hans Küng on their side or mine?) Given the right time and place I imagine that the Presbyterians and the Catholics could have had Dick and me at one another's throats once we bolted into adulthood—we all know such things have happened. My Presbyterianism burgeoned and it would be hard to find a more devout professor of that conviction than I was at fifteen. But age, the times, the hormones, and the adolescent trauma of finding out that adults don't have all the answers all combined, and my faith became attenuated, and one day it was gone. Protestant Christians do not fall like angels; they are misled, or discouraged or worn down, like human beings.

Some years passed and one Saturday I did what was formerly unthinkable, I wedded a Roman Catholic. We were married in an eight-hundred-year-old church which dominated the highest hill in the Hessian village of Oberursel. I had been instructed in the Catholic faith by American Jesuits who were studying in Frankfurt, and Father Houdek married the two of us within that venerable building in the first English Mass it had heard. The German parish priest had advised me not to "convert" simply to be Roman Catholic in name or form, and

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so I did not, and so I have not. I introduce my comments this way to make it clear that while I am outside the Roman Catholic Church, I am somewhat informed; while I am unreligious I am not irreligious; while I am non-Catholic I am also non-Protestant; and while I have envied communicants every Sunday and on every day of holy obligation for the past seven years, I have been unable to join them. Most important is that all of my first-hand information about the Church was gathered after 1967. I have read, but have never seen a Mass in Latin. There are certain agonies or joys of change which I simply do not know. But while in the intimacy of self-counsel I speak to myself as a Christian, what I think of the Roman Catholic Church is intimately connected to the reasons why I cannot walk those ten yards to Communion.

There is little, if anything, that a non-Catholic can say that you have not already said to yourself. Any six-month chunk of *Commonweal* describes the procession of "burning issues." Self-criticism within the Church is manifold, and the teeth into which that criticism is hurled are often set in jaws as firm as those of my anti-Catholic forefathers and my grandparents who were nourished on the corn-fed evangelism of the Bible Belt. As Zacheus, my only advantage is my sycamore; I can tell you what is remarkable. Hopefully you will take heart at the good things I see in the visible representation of that man who stopped many years ago and beckoned, even a publican, to come near.

Before Vatican II

In pre-Vatican II days the Roman Catholic Church knew what it was. That knowledge may have been congruent with divine will, an ossified model of medieval politics, a rock of righteousness in an acid sea of unrighteousness, or mere parochialism—but that knowledge was certain. Non-Catholics were both angered and cowed by that certainty. One typical non-Catholic (not anti-Catholic) joke was that if the pathway to heaven were a toll-road, Roman Catholicism would be the exact-change lane. Though the implications of that quip are unfair and irresponsible, they limn fairly how non-Catholics felt. Converts wanted that certainty. Sometimes they wanted a strong sense of history to give brief life a greater context, sometimes they wanted a strong leader, sometimes they wanted an escape hatch from fear, because merely practicing the faith is very easy—one can schedule salvation. Like jail-house lawyers, converts could be counted upon to follow the punctilios in lock step.

As recently as three years ago I heard a priest before a congregation of farmers in southern Illinois informing his parishioners that the difference between them, the Roman Catholics, and the Protestants, was that if the fifty souls gathered in that building obeyed the rules, they were "guaranteed" a place in heaven. But southern Illinois seems to be a ghetto where that old-time religion is practiced by all professing Christians. Buried in my neo-cortex are the lines:

> Give me that old-time religion
> That old-time religion
> Give me that old-time religion
> It's good enough for me.
> It was good for Paul and Silas,
> It was good for Paul and Silas,
> It was good for Paul and Silas,
> And it's good enough for me.

I have heard the same sentiment (without the verse) voiced often in Catholic Churches, but "old-time" is a vague description. Do you mean the religion of Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti, or Eugenio Pacelli, or whom? Today the Church seems to have lost (for better or for worse) that venerable, irritating, compelling surety. Avery Dulles has called *Lumen Gentium*, "the most imposing achievement of Vatican II." He has also pointed out that this "mighty document" was "hammered into shape on the anvil of vigorous controversy." As a non-Catholic I find *Lumen Gentium* the most confusing achievement of Vatican II, and the very "anvil of vigorous controversy" rather than the sword or plowshare that was beat out upon it. While everyone gets something (a noble document), no one really gets anything. Consider, for example, that *Lumen Gentium* states:

> The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. Jn. 2:20,27), cannot err in matters of belief.

The same document also maintains:

> Therefore his [the Roman Pontiff's] definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, an assistance promised to him in blessed Peter. Therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment.

I do not deny that these quotations are lifted from context—indeed there is an abundance of context lubricating the transition from one statement to the other—but I do think that in a document that utters both statements without stammering, the context is meretricious. The Church no longer knows what it is. Exegetes of *Lumen Gentium* are notable mainly for their lack of accord, and from the outside, the exegesis looks less like a symphonic orchestra tuning their various instruments than like the neighborhood kids picking up sides. To this non-Catholic who hungers for communion, the Church is relatively but not generically catholic. For all its reforms the Church seems more eager to define its political role (right or left), and more concerned with resisting or overcoming internal opposition than in becoming inclusive—catholic—accepting multitudes.

The Roman Catholics I know are a fine group, and as a group they are no better or no worse than the English

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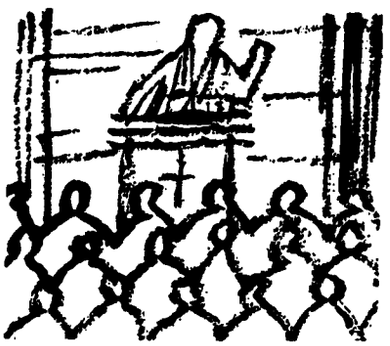
or the Irish, the Jews, management or labor, Mets' fans, or the citizens of Cleveland. There is a Catholic on the throne of Peter, a Catholic in Congress, a Catholic on the White House staff, and a Catholic in jail—what is one to say? Some Catholics think they are a bit better than others, but so thought the Jews of the Gentiles, and so think some Baptists. Roman Catholicism can be an ennobling renewal of the life of Jesus Christ, or it can be a convenient way to program the time between this moment and death. Neither the Groppis nor the good Sisters who manufacture Communion wafers in Bordentown have a patent on piety. (There I go, pontificating.) The highest compliment I can pay the Roman Catholic Church is that while its individual members may engage in brush wars with one another, the Church taken as a whole is profoundly introspective. The "conservatives" wonder to the extent of their capacity to wonder—"What is happening; what should I do?" The "liberals" ask the same question but add, "should I stay?" The "radicals" do not ask questions, they know the answers, even if they cannot always make those answers clear to everyone. The intractable front of Protestantism was constructed in



reaction to the arrogance of the Roman Catholic Church. Where once the Catholic Church could look with righteous disdain on the schisms, and splinters, and slivers of the Protestants, those recalcitrants can now relish the self-doubt of their elder. But what often appears to be a weakness, may, in fact, be a redeeming strength. If the controversy becomes a fight for power, then all is lost—all, but if you can learn to love your enemies, wash the feet of your disciples, and have your feet dried by the hair of a sinner, then you will win, not by conquest, but by example.

Within the Church there are anomalies—incidental and organic. There are many incidental anomalies, but they are innocuous and depend on taste to a great extent. I, for instance, object to the yearly parish publication which lists (to the cent) who gave what in the annual Christmas collection. We sneak our contribution in sometime around February when nobody is looking. I object to priests who stop Mass to herd latecomers into empty pews; people obey like whipped sheep, but what point has been made except that the priest can act in a way Christ never did? I object to singing "America" as an exit hymn, though I would challenge anyone who questioned my basic patriotism. But who would join, or leave, or pay attention to a church over such matters? Everyone has his own private list of irritants and it may include a person, a place, a practice or a priest ("All we have to do to get straight with God is to get our head screwed on right," was the theme for one homily I heard). Still, what I object to, someone else probably enjoys—and I continue to insist that the Church must contain multitudes.

Most loyal commentators on the Church sense trouble. They can see the Church in "crisis," in "decline," a "bare ruined choir," in need of "remaking," and so on. For the non-Catholic and, I suspect, for most Catholics, the central issues are not too complicated. Celibacy and the official political role of the Church are questions the Pope and his bishops and their priests may all resolve some afternoon in the Coliseum. James Hitchcock may be interested in the "American Catholic Left," but I think the transition from John Murray to Philip Berrigan is significant only when one uses an historical microscope. Surely if the public at large were not used to thinking of American Catholics as political conservatives there would be little notice given to a man who was politically radical and also a priest. Invariably the description is reversed: here is a priest and here is a nun and they have done *x*. The media relys on the stereotypes of both Catholics and non-Catholics to bring this feature of the actions of some of our fellow citizens into high relief. I suspect those men and women who enter religious life are acutely aware of the leverage they have by virtue of their collars and habits. Those Catholics who wish to dissociate themselves from the radicals have little ammunition but to say "stop," and depending on who they are, "or else." Yet what is most distressing is that most parish priests I have listened to seem unread in controversial matters, or they disagree and won't present the issues fairly, or they agree and either are afraid to speak up or contemptuous of the discernment of "the body of the faithful as a whole." When the Berrigans go to jail, that is news, but when parish priests are ignorant of the arguments behind critical issues, or are unwilling to broach a subject with their parishioners, that is pernicious. Priests demonstrate, priests defect, priests marry, and their actions are answered with homilies on obedience. Women call for equal rights and the clergy from top to bottom orchestrate a piece on Mariology.

Zacheus sees two organic anomalies that are difficult to account for. The first is that his little girl will never be an acolyte, and will never be ordained to consecrate the Host. Why should Zacheus, for all his sins, open his home to a man who strains both logic and his sense of what is right? The second anomaly is more complicated. Why should a man marry if he contemplates

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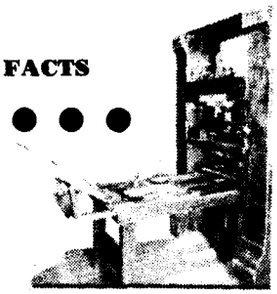
divorce, even theoretically? Why should a man join a congregation if he contemplates contention? To what advantage does a man place himself under the rule of the Bishop of Rome? My oath, my commitment, have value only as far as I have self-respect, and in a milieu of general moral relativism, my word is all I have left. It cannot be given lightly. Either I am willing to accept the infallible pronouncements of the Pope (and the two that have been made seem of curious unimportance), or I join the fifth column, or I go back on my word. The Church at large has no real notion of where power lies, and until a confrontation arises, neither does the hierarchy of the Church. Everyone suspects that the Pope really has control, but he is too frightened, too wary, or too wise to prove it. The tensions which grew in the last decade resulted from a misapprehension of what nearly everyone saw as the *reason* for change. But change, in itself, is a mote in the eye of infinity; the single important issue is the spirit of change. What non-Catholics saw in John XXIII was the rule of love rather than rule by law. Convening the Council was a tacit admission that while we venerated our past, we were willing to put forth newer, simpler commandments in an imitation of Christ. Vatican I was ended by a pitiful war few people can recall. Vatican II was finished and crippled by many words and much equivocation. The example of John XXIII was more influential than the sixteen documents; his life was a parable, not a definition.

Before I conclude I would like to remove my view of Roman Catholicism from the court of public opinion, from the arena of controversy, from the pages of *Commonweal*. When my wife's mother was dying of what specialists had agreed was terminal cancer, and on one difficult afternoon, we called both our priest and our doctor, we saw a drama that rescues the Church from all criticism. The doctor was ready with a syringe of demerol, but Mother wanted the last rites first—while she was alert. The priest began the sacrament. The doctor, impatient, said, "a lot of good that will do." The priest continued the rite without retort, but I realized that he could have eyed the syringe and answered, "A lot of good *that* will do." Within our experience death is the only mystery more mysterious than life. A few months later my father-in-law, now a widower, was also in futile combat with cancer. The last Mass he attended was said by a friend around our dining-room table. There was the priest, the father, the daughter and the son-in-law. I was within two feet of the Body of Christ. Later Dad said that was the best Mass he'd ever been to. There was nothing mawkish in either of these moments. The issues were simple: life, death and the immortal soul. Yet Christians of all persuasions seem to dally on the periphery of what is essential in this, or any other age. I have no real desire to join the communion of saints, but I long for the communion of my fellows with our God.

Insofar as the Roman Catholic Church is ancient, it is simply old. Insofar as it is new, it is fumbling for some sense of the future. A certain number of Catholics will remain within the Church because they have been trained well. A convert or so will show up, looking for something to combat entropy. There will be defections. But we in the sycamores wait for the word. The word is not heard in weekly homilies, nor found in the pages of *Commonweal*, nor beat out upon the typewriter. The Roman Catholic Church has the greatest potential for initiating genuine ecumenism and persuading and proselytizing. The only question is whether love will prevail over law, whether the Church can beckon support where it once, long ago, demanded it. Just as the decade since Vatican II is insignificant in the history of the Church, so is the two thousand years since Christ insignificant in the history of man. Our attention is attracted by what happened, not how long ago it happened. Roman Catholicism can be the most sublime or the most parochial institution of mankind. Its success, its survival, depends on including rather than excluding. The Church will lapse or last on the law of love.

THE PROBLEM WITH FACTS

PRESS



When I was a kid I used to watch *Dragnet* on television and, like most people no doubt, what I remember best is Jack Webb's dead voice and blank, Indian's face saying, "Just the facts, Ma'am." Don't tell me what you thought or felt or went through; just tell me what you saw, what you heard, and what you did. His attitude seemed properly objective, a bit cold perhaps, but to the point, and I still get restless when people try to explain too much. What are wanted in complicated situations are facts, not all that distracting emotion which obscures the facts like a fog. The facts matter; all the rest is special pleading.

Like good detectives, the best journalists have an eye and a nose for fact, for the discrepancy or contradiction or false note which hint where the bodies lie. Whole reputations have been made by finding out one fact or group of facts a week before anyone else, and the most interesting journalists are not those with the nimblest literary style, like Garry Wills or Nicholas Von Hoffman, but the fact-gatherers like Seymour Hersh and Jack Anderson. It is their job to establish the truth of the matter at hand, not to figure out what it means. Too often it means nothing much, or doesn't mean anything *yet*. In

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all the broad Pacific of journalism about Watergate there is not one island of really good writing because, until now at least, it has been the facts which mattered. Not why the President did as he did, which is a matter of conjecture, but what did he know and when did he know it?

The primacy of fact in journalism has theoretical roots as well. It is based on the notion that the best way to understand any complicated political dispute is to cut through the attitudinizing and special pleading and shameless emotional appeal to the facts in the matter. The conflict between Arab and Israeli in the Middle East is just such a dispute and when I began to take a close interest in it last fall I proceeded in the logical way by immersing myself in the facts, which in this case means the history of the struggle between Zionism and the native people of Palestine. Here there are facts in surfeit for the most ferocious appetite.

As a basic introduction I recommend the books of the prolific Walter Lacquer and all the back issues of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, George Antonious' *The Arab Awakening* and perhaps Christopher Sykes' *Crossroads to Israel.* After they have been crammed in you ought to pay visits to the New York press offices of the Israeli Consulate, The League of Arab States and the Palestine Liberation Organization in order to pick up copies of their books and pamphlets. Two Lord & Taylor shopping bags will do the job. Even this mountain of fact-rubble will hardly tell you all there is to know but it will at least allow you to talk to the apologists on either side without being constantly surprised by inconvenient facts. When you go to the Middle East, which of course is the next step, it will not do to be ignorant of Deir Yassin or Ma'alot and the Nazi sympathies of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the 400-odd Arab villages erased from the land and maps of Israel and so on.

Well, I did all that. I read the books, journals and pamphlets, and I went to the Middle East and spent six weeks talking to people in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt, and what I learned—perhaps instead I ought to say what I came away with, is the uneasy feeling that when all is said and done . . . the facts don't matter.

Wherever I went I found a sharp discrepancy between what exists on paper, and what exists in flesh-and-blood reality. On paper the Egyptians have so many tanks, so many planes. In reality Cairo is falling apart. It is not simply that the elevators are continually breaking down, to give one example. Elevators are expensive; a poor country can be excused for not buying new ones, but how do you explain the fact that the silverware in the hotels is not clean, that the floors of the government press office have not been mopped or the windows washed? A walk through the bazaar proves that the Egyptians are inventive and intelligent; they can make anything out of anything. A talk with an Egyptian laborer proves he is willing to work all day for next to nothing. The problem is purely one of management. How can a people organize and maintain a modern military machine when it cannot wash its own windows? The number of planes and tanks are facts; the decrepitude of Cairo is only an impression, and yet I think it matters more than the facts.

On paper the Palestinians, or at least the Palestine Liberation Organization, has tacitly conceded a willingness to settle for a West Bank State, while in reality no Palestinian is willing to concede Israel's right to continue as a Jewish state on Palestinian territory. The fact on paper is all Kissinger has to work with; the reality of Palestinian resentment threatens to undermine every effort at agreement. On paper the Sinai and the Golan Heights belong to Egypt and Syria; in reality they are bleak desert in the one instance, too small to matter in the other, and yet the Egyptians and Syrians have all but wrecked their countries to regain them. On paper and even in conversation all but the extremists say their primary goal is peace, and on paper an exchange of territory for peace seems reasonable and possible, but such talk has an abstract air about it. The reality is one of mistrust, grievance, hurt pride, anger and determination on all sides.

But that is only part of what I mean when I say the facts don't matter. Six months ago I thought a close scrutiny of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict might establish who was right, and that knowing who was right might suggest what to do about the conflict. Now I'm not sure. In a way, right and wrong have nothing to do with it. The Palestinians have a right to want to go home, and they have a right to use military means to do it. (Whether or not they also have a right to focus their military energy on women and children and weightlifters at Munich is quite another question.) At the same time the Israelis have a right to defend themselves. If two wrongs don't make a right, what do two rights make? I think what they make is an old, old reality: a combat. . . . The question when Muhammad Ali and George Frazier fight is not who is right—that has nothing to do with it—but who will win?

It is not the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict which matters, in other words, but the conflict itself. The battle has been joined; the belligerents cannot be talked out of it anymore than the Germans, British or French could be talked into giving up World War I. All the talk, the argument over fact and justice, is simply pursuit of victory by other means.

I take it as given that the Israelis mean to preserve an independent Jewish state, that the Palestinians mean to reassert their national rights in their national homeland, and that Egypt and Syria mean to regain the Sinai and the Golan Heights. They can't all win; none, I think, will volunteer to lose; the prospects for peace are

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dim so long as the belligerents are not too battered to hope. When you are there you are struck less by the complex history which led to this terrible situation, so perfectly suited to the qualification and the footnote, than by its reality as a combat in which someone is going to . . . lose . . .

If I were an artist, and if I had 10,000 words with which I might try to capture some sense of the people I talked to, of their fatal opposition, of the desperation and wounded pride of the Arabs, of the anxiety and determination of Israel, of all the human emotion which obscures the dry and useless facts, then perhaps I might explain why there seems to be so little chance for anything except continued war. But I have nothing of the kind, and neither do the reporters for the daily newspapers, who must make do with a column of newsprint a couple of times a week. That gives them room enough for the facts, nothing more, and in this case the facts only obscure the reality like a fog. THOMAS POWERS

HEARD MELODIES

THE SCREEN

Early in Robert Altman's *Nashville* there is a chain reaction freeway crash that is, except for an assassination at the end, the only time the film's twenty-four characters all get together. And in the thick of this crash a boat being trailered by a car proves to be full of water, which it sloshes all over the highway. That boat, though only a momentary detail, suggests quite well what sort of movie *Nashville* is: the sort where water in a boat is a more likely occurrence than a boat in water. One way or another, all the characters in *Nashville* have things backwards like this. Their lives are all transposed, up-ended, turned inside out. At the beginning country-Western star Barbara Jean (Ronee Blakley) is convalescing, and at the end, after her condition has deteriorated steadily for the film's whole two and a half hours, she is shot and wounded. Everybody else's life seems to move that way—in reverse—too.

Basically, however, the life style of these characters is not so much neat reversal as haphazard interruption. After all, that's what a freeway crash really is, isn't it? An interruption. Throughout the film people constantly walk out on each other, hang up on each other, and run into each other's cars. Even the songs of this so-called "Opry Land" seem to compete in a continuous game of Stop the Music. While a young soldier is trying to listen to Barbara Jean sing, Mr. Green (Keenan Wynn) insists on talking about how his son died. (But later, just after Mr. Green hears that his wife is dead too, the soldier comes up and starts talking about how his mother saved Barbara Jean's life.)

At a party given by Opry star Haven Hamilton (Henry Gibson), a journalist (Geraldine Chaplin) coaxes Haven's shy son into singing her his only song, but then she runs off to interview Elliott Gould before the song is over. At a stag smoker run by a political campaign manager, the hooting of the audience finally silences the evening's entertainment, who was not told she's supposed to strip rather than sing. At a stock car race, another aspiring singer (Barbara Harris) has her performance completely drowned out by the roar of the engines. From the film's first recording session, which Haven walks out on, to its closing concert, which is called on account of assassination, people and events butt in on each other all the time.

In fact, the very form of the film is one which butts in on itself as Altman tries to keep track of his twenty-four characters. When Haven cues the control booth at the recording session for another take, Altman cuts to the booth; but it turns out to be the booth in another studio where a singer named Linnea Reese (Lily Tomlin) is working, not the booth in Haven's studio. Similarly, Mr. Green's cry of anguish at his wife's death segues into the campaign manager's chuckle as he inspects the night club where the smoker is to be held. And the night of the smoker, there's another drama being played out in another club across town, where Linnea has come for a rendezvous with a pop singer (Keith Carradine). Altman cuts back and forth between these two clubs in such a way that we are sometimes unsure which drama we are reacting to.

For at least the last two or three films, interruption has been very much the style of the action in Altman's work. The murder at the end of *The Long Goodbye* interrupts a conversation between the murderer and his victim. The prison break in *Thieves Like Us* is interrupted by another conversation, an argument which causes one of the thieves to put another out of the getaway car in mid-escape. The end of *California Split* seems, to one of the two gamblers in the film, an incomprehensible interruption of a streak of luck. When you look back a couple of years, *Nashville* seems to follow Altman's recent work as a logical (which is to say, screwball) development.

Yet in *Nashville* this style of action becomes something more than what it has been before. In the earlier films the action is forever being interrupted by something. In this film, the action *is* interruption: interruption becomes the main event. This is so partly because there are so many characters there can be no main plot line. The film has a good half-dozen plot lines that repeatedly overlap, obscure, intrude on and interrupt each other like the cars in that freeway accident. One of these plot lines deals with a presidential candidate very like George Wallace, a grass-roots candidate whose party

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is called the "Replacement" party. "Replacement" is what interruption becomes in this film, too: a permanent condition, a usurpation rather than a momentary distraction. When Barbara Jean is felled by the assassin in the end, the woman who couldn't get a song in edgewise at the stock car race picks up the microphone and goes right on with the show. It's as if she were an expected stand-in rather than an interloper.

Altman's films have always given the impression that he was trying to distill the metaphor out of his plots, to boil off pure images from ordinary reality. With *Nashville*, he perhaps succeeds. Where *M*A*S*H*, *Brewster McCloud*, *Images* and *California Split* are each films organized around some central, controlling metaphor, *Nashville* simply is a metaphor. To Altman the place itself, Nashville, is in some vague, urgent way a metaphor for the whole country; and since he feels himself to be dealing with a metaphor rather than a fact, there is no need to restrain his fantasies. The last thing he intends *Nashville* to be is a documentary on the Nashville scene. If Altman succeeds more completely than before, perhaps it is because he has been able to carry his ideas to such extremes. In *Brewster McCloud* or *Images*, the disruption of reality with images seems a listless, even aimless effort. Like the dialogue in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, at times the visual language of Altman's films has seemed to be mumbling. But in *Nashville*, this is no longer the case. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

THE FOOL, THE ATTENDANT, THE VILLAIN

KIRKPATRICK SALE

How the Good Guys Finally Won
JIMMY BRESLIN
Viking, $6.95

The Last Nixon Watch
JOHN OSBORNE
New Republic, $7.95

Breach of Faith
THEODORE H. WHITE
Atheneum, $10.95

IT MAY BE that I've had a summer of too many straw-circuit plays, but somehow these three authors keep reminding me of Shakespearean characters: Breslin the fool, Osborne the attendant lord, White the villain.

Breslin as the fool has provided us with a light, good-natured, somewhat rambling tale about two fat, whisky-drinking, cigar-smoking Irish politicians —Tip O'Neill, the Massachusetts Congressman who helped engineer the House forces behind the impeachment proceedings, and Jimmy Breslin himself, who hung around watching O'Neill at work. Breslin's fool is witty: "The Office of President is such a bastardized thing, half royalty and half democracy, that nobody knows whether to genuflect or spit." He is privy to court gossip, such as the story of how Nixon needled Kissinger during one important White House meeting on the Yom Kippur war about "a broad" that he had supposedly just been in bed with. He is deft and glancing, offering small set-pieces, profiles in miniature, anecdotes, brief descriptions, as if writing a series of short columns—which has always been his true art—and careful enough even to avoid the actual impeachment hearings, as if that might be too heavy for us all. And he is, true to his calling, obsequious to his liege, who is variously described as "courtly," "a lovely spring rain of a man," "effective," "trustworthy," and possessed of "the full nobility of his profession," capable even, along with the other "good guys" of the House, of taking us "to heights we as a nation never have seen before."

Yet with all of this Breslin is insightful, as a good Shakespearean fool should be, with more than a grain or two of truth among his chaff, intelligent and interesting about the backroom workings of Congress, the corruptions of fund-raising, the nature of lawyers, the style of Boston politics, the workings of the Judiciary Committee staff. In the end there's no mistaking the fact that for all his lightness Breslin, like an unemployed jester, is nobody's fool.

John Osborne is a different matter, for though (as the *New Republic*'s White House man) he was close to the Nixon court for six years, he seems to have been totally overwhelmed by it and is unable to muster any of the fool's insight or the jester's wit. He is just *there*, some third-ranked Earl of Suffolk, watching everything that goes on, recording it without highlights or shadows, endlessly scribbling, and far more concerned with having "access" to this or that White House functionary than with the corruptions that man might be weaving. In not a single one of his four previous *Nixon Watch* books did Osborne ever betray wit or wisdom, and those who came to admire that in this man will not be disappointed with this last entry in the series. It is a dull collection of journalistic essays, insignificant to begin with and the more obvious when put

KIRKPATRICK SALE *is the author of* SDS. *His new book,* Power shift: The Rise of the Southern Rim and Its Challenge to the Eastern Establishment, *is a study of the Nixon Administration and will be published by* Random House *in November.*

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between hard covers, pale, insipid froth that does not deserve to last any longer than froth normally does.

With Theodore White, however, we are in still a different realm. This man is not a fool nor a supernumerary, but a positive blackguard, a three-suited, worsted-stocking knave.

Teddy White has become an American Institution, albeit of the MacDonald's rather than the Smithsonian kind. His *Making of the President* books have been enormously successful—so much so, in fact, that this title, unlike any other in the history of American publishing, has now become trademarked. He is a regular contributor to *Reader's Digest*, still the most widely read magazine in America, in whose pages much of this present book first appeared. He is automatically on the best-seller lists and a regular with the Book-of-the-Month Club, who made this book their June selection. As such, then, White wields unusual influence over the received impressions and popular understandings of contemporary history, providing both casual readers and serious students with an instant and accepted version of how American politics work.

The terrible, frightening thing is that White is at once so muddle-headed and so simple-minded, so sentimental and so cantankerously conservative. He is an exact *Reader's Digest* rightist, a man who can argue that direct democracy is dangerous and that the Electoral College system is valuable because—now get this—it prevents elections "from degenerating into the violence that can accompany the narrow act of head-counting." A man who can write, with a straight face, about the "foreign menace" of Southeast Asia and the "brilliancy" of the American subjection of postwar Japan. A man who believes that "manipulation" by those television networks and interference by youthful "amateurs" are really the two decisive elements of midcentury political power, and has not a single, not even a glancing, not the merest passing, reference to the role of American corporations, their money and their lobbies and their influence, in the running of American government. A man who at the age of 60 is as much in awe of the President—*any* President—as a six-year-old on a White House tour ("I'm always scared when I speak to a President"), a fawning, genuflective chauvinist.

If White were merely a Wechsler-Broder journalist, he would be just a scalawag; as an Institution, however, he is nothing less than a villain. He throws all the events of contemporary history into a bag of his own devising, jumbles them around, and miraculously picks out one falsity after another, one pernicious myth after another, and places them before us with great solemnity, as if they were truths, and proceeds to make of them a grand design that is supposed to end up looking something like a vast American flag. He is not writing history, he is manipulating it, simplifying it, distorting it, *using* it—and only his skill with inflated rhetoric, his obfuscating purple bombast, lets him get away with it.

For example. The Watergate exposures, says White, "gave the American people the intolerable choice between cynically accepting an aberration in conventional political practice or dramatically repudiating the hereditary faith in their national government." Now this is simple nonsense, jibberish, the mewling of alleycats, and yet it has a ring of solemnity that lets it slip by as if it were a profundity. And again: Nixon, White says, "destroyed the myth that binds American together . . . that somewhere in American life there is at least one man who stands for the law, the President." Now this is not history-writing, it is fantasy-making: no such myth exists anywhere, even in the simplest civics class; it is not one myth but an elaborate system of laws, markets, and corporate exploitation that binds this nation together, such as it is; it is a basic principle of our jurisprudence that the law stands apart from all men and there is no one who stands "for" it; even before Nixon no adult seriously thought that Presidents were specially careful about hewing to laws except those they themselves approved; and even if it were true that such a myth existed, and Nixon broke it, then it would follow logically that America at present is no longer bound together, and that is palpably untrue.

The whole book reads the same way: pompous nonsense creating dangerous distortions.

I had begun making a list of White's distortions as I went through his book, but the list grew so long, and I so despairing, that I eventually tore it up in disgust. Three of the most glaring of White's fabrications, however, stick in my memory, and craw, and they should be pinioned briefly.

1. *That the Watergate crimes were not so evil in themselves and Nixon's only real sin was in the cover-up.* But those crimes were in fact monumental, including burglary, bugging, bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, election rigging, and tax evasion at a bare minimum, and they were part of a massive, illegal system of government repression that had been going on at least since 1970 and was capable even of operating against one of the two major political parties. And anyway, if they weren't so evil, do you think Nixon would have risked the cover-up?

2. *That Watergate was the fault of a single man, with a bad upbringing and a bad staff, and revealed nothing wrong with the American system.* But in fact, though Nixon was indisputably an evil person, he merely extended existing governmental and electoral practices and in all his crimes depended on the cooperation of various executives, lawyers, politicians, and establishmentarian types and on the acquiescence for the most part of the pulpit, press, and public. The shock of Watergate was precisely that it *did* expose a part of the machinery of the system that normally remains concealed and thus revealed the sorry condition of modern political life.

3. *That Nixon, however much you blame him for Watergate, was a brilliant master of foreign policy.* But in fact Nixon's foreign policy was a failure: he threw away millions of dollars and lives for nearly six years on a war which he was finally forced to surren-

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der; he was manipulated into a detente with Russia which ended up producing repeated suckerings at the SALT negotiations and a grain deal disastrous for the U.S. economy; and he was responsible for the collapse of the American dollar through two devaluations, the decline of the European federation, the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile, and the capitulation of the West to the OPEC oil powers. Obviously the man was just as much a bumbler abroad as he was at home.

White can go on and on with the creation of such distortions, but I'll spare you any more: these suffice to show his myopic vision, his foolishness, his cleverness, and his villainy. Yes, villainy—for clearly the little man is hoping that such *Reader's Digest* ideas as these will become accepted into the popular accounts and academic textbooks of our time, achieving the stature of Received Truth. And that's dangerous.

Thank goodness, then, that White shows at least two monumental ineptitudes. First, he is boring, boring, *boring*, going on and on with his little theories, back and forth with his capsulated histories, up and down with his inconsequential details, in and out with his pontifications about This Great Nation, around and about with Watergate events whose facts are familiar to all of us, even the slow readers. And not once in all these pages—unless I fell asleep, which is always possible—did I detect the slightest trace of humor, waggishness, drollery, or charm, not once a witticism, quip, or *mot*.

Second, White is a genuinely bad writer, and he's getting worse the older he grows. Things like: "nationalism is a bedrock issue . . . mined most intensively by Republicans" (when was the last time you saw people mining bedrock?), "the White House had begun to ripple in a tight but widening vortex of internal turmoil" (neatest trick of the oceanographic week), and "he left behind two men who knew they had triggered reality" (whatever that may be). He can even refer to San Clemente as Nixon's "Elba on the Pacific," when what he really means is Saint Helena—Elba is the place that Napoleon came *back* from to rule France for another hundred days. And he is probably America's greatest living master of the molasses metaphor, as in: "Stripped of power, they were what they had been in the beginning—the flotsam of politics, now left behind on the beach by the wave that had carried them so high, scavengers' trophies, their sadness gloated over by most of those who came to watch." It's enough to make a person gag.

Teddy White began his career by writing, with the same stunted conservatism and the same smarmy prose, about China, and he is talking these days about going back there next year to do another book. Horrifying as that prospect may seem to the Chinese, I fervently hope that they can see their way to offering the man an invitation. That would mean that White would be out of the country for the 1976 elections, and nothing would benefit the American electoral process—to say nothing of those who care for contemporary history—more than that.

BOOKS

EDMUND WILSON: THE PRIVATE SIDE

JANET GROTH

The Twenties: From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period, by Edmund Wilson

LEON EDEL, *ed.*

Farrar, Straus, $10

The first of several posthumous volumes of Edmund Wilson's notebooks and diaries has now been published under the title, *The Twenties*, and it is of considerable interest because it offers an index to Wilson the man of a kind that only notebooks and diaries can provide. Take, for example, a series of entries from February, 1924:

Wilson is on a train heading for California. He is reading Sophocles' *Electra* in Greek. There is a little girl on the train—one Maxine, age eight, travelling alone from Milwaukee. Wilson takes note of her as she lunches on Zu-Zu gingersnaps, cries from homesickness, laughs at her own jokes and stalls so she won't have to go to bed in a berth.

After a while the Greek play begins to have a morbid effect on him. The tension of waiting for the girl's revenge to work itself out in the murder of her mother tells on his mood. He thinks of other gruesome murders closer to home—some real and some fictional ones he has just read about—all Californian.

The last report Wilson gives on the little girl concludes this way: "I am afraid she is going to grow up into a mealy-faced, mole-specked, hard-r'd, pale-green-eyed Middle Western girl, who says 'This Here'. . ."

Poor Maxine—one can't help but feel that she might have fared better if Wilson had been reading *Antigone* instead. Or, better still, *What Maisie Knew*, a Henry James novel he rather liked that has a child heroine.

There is another demonstration of art affecting Wilson's attitude toward life in the notebook entry he wrote after seeing the film, *Spread Eagle*. He was much moved by the guns being transported up to the front to the tune of "and those caissons go rolling along." It prompted him to muse: "How the

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war—by fettering our activity and our attention to inhuman, uninteresting things, to the deliberate, methodical, relentless machinery of destruction—made us appreciate human beings . . . With what relief, what delight, one turned from the guns . . . to the good nature of a comrade. . . . I never loved humanity so deeply and sincerely before and I never expect to again—" Remembering Wilson's earlier *A Prelude* (the notebooks covering 1908-1919), it is interesting to note that here, in response to the artificial stimulus of a movie, he is writing more expressively and with more emotion about the war than he was able to do under the stimulus of war itself.

The most surprising revelation *The Twenties* holds is the insight it affords into the ironic, even tragic fate of Edmund Wilson—that he, possessor of one of the most eminent literary sensibilities of our age, could respond emotionally to life only at the remove of art. That is the serious implication of the entries on *Electra* and *Spread Eagle* and the burden of this book. It is a problematic one for the reader because it means that, aside from the glimpses Wilson gives us of his art-induced emotions and those we are able to piece together from between the lines with the help of Leon Edel's commentary, the book remains a curious phenomenon—a piece of personal writing nearly devoid of personal feeling.

In Wilson's account of his relations with women, for example, the emotional block is pronounced. Mary Blair, Wilson's first wife (an actress who appeared in many O'Neill plays) is scarcely referred to except as a shadowy figure who shares, for a time, an apartment with Wilson on Washington Square. Of their daughter, Rosalind, there is barely a trace, save for one passage in which Wilson manifests a linguistic interest in the speech habits she has acquired. Another selection might properly take its place as a key item in the Wilson index. The entry seems to reflect a displacement of the emotion and wonder Wilson may well have felt for his infant daughter,

registering it instead as a warm appreciation of the cleverness, beauty and ingenuity he finds in her set of German blocks.

In contrast to this reticence about the women close to home, many entries contain extensive descriptions of taxicab rides and conversations on couches with an assortment of Follies girls, streetwalkers and sales clerks with whom Wilson struck up frequent but fleeting acquaintances.

There are isolated entries in these notebooks in which Wilson shows that he understands in part the nature of his problem; he speaks deprecatingly of the praise he had, even in the '20's, already begun to receive for his "sober judgment" in literary matters, saying: "—yet, except when I was writing about literature, nobody could have worse judgment and I—I was invariably either treating occasions of importance either too casually or too flippantly or extravagantly overdoing other occasions which were intrinsically trivial—" He tells us of his propensity, when in the midst of one of those archetypal '20's parties, complete with Greenwich Village setting, bad gin and Bohemian company, to leave it and go off to one side and write about it. We learn from his notes Wilson's conviction that "Literature is merely the result of our rude collisions with reality." Again and again reality is portrayed as the wounder, the conveyer of rude shocks and human life as a disease against which some, i.e., the critic, may prefer to be immunized by the protective inoculations of art rather than "risk the more serious and *perhaps for him fatal*, infection of life itself." (my italics)

Wilson saw the act of reporting as a way of bringing art to the service of staving off the pains of life, as if by clinging to the external factual world, by observing and setting it down accurately, an outward order could be achieved, a valuable defense to pit against the chaos within. In fact, Wilson gives us more than 200 entries of nature description that represent just such acutely observed pictures of external reality.

In the second half of *The Twenties* the functions of sex take over the territory formerly occupied by these external landscapes, absorbing a great deal of Wilson's time, and nearly all the attention of his notes. The way his working class girl friends look, feel to the touch, taste and smell is minutely noted by Wilson, who seems more than ever enveloped in the pathos of alienation as he resolutely records the pertinent facts about the agitated limbs, the furry cavities, the undergarments and the personal histories of his plebeian bedmates.

Finally, toward the very end, the notebooks hint at the possibility that, as Edel suggests, an immersion in a certain kind of literature (Wilson was reading the Symbolists at the time, in preparation for *Axel's Castle*) was having a liberating effect on Wilson's life. Wilson was involved at this time with a girl, Anna, in a more than usually lasting, more than usually satisfying affair. Whether or not it was his intense personal reaction to, say, the lustiness of Joyce, that helped bring it about, the fact is that—in the greater tenderness Wilson shows for his sexual partner, and in his greater air of relaxation before the task of writing about sex—the last entries seem to take on the note of a freer man. Ultimately, Wilson is able to take the reader into his confidence and into his bedroom even when he is in the presence of one of his wives (actually it is a sort of pre-wedding honeymoon which he shares with Margaret Canby, in Connecticut). The volume ends on a mellow note, with

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a touching moment of understanding between himself and Mary Blair—achieved, poignantly enough, on the occasion of their having been granted a divorce.

The most satisfying way to read *The* Twenties is as a fascinating, revealing, but largely subtextual history of the "wound" that drove Edmund Wilson to great successes as a literary critic and reporter par excellence but which exacted from him a fearful toll of aborted relationships and, to some extent, failed artistic ambitions—Wilson's novels, *I Thought of Daisy* and *Memoirs of Hecate County* and his poems never achieved the success of his nonfiction prose. Providentially, this is precisely the approach invited by the penetrating, insightful and frankly psychological essay of Leon Edel's which introduces the book. People who value Wilson as the cerebral reporter (ever clear and concise, yet always somewhat aristocratically remote) will no doubt be annoyed by what the more polite will term this "soft-focus" frame, and the rest will call plain "fuzzy-minded."

For these readers there is some consolation in the bulk of the text itself—a matter of some 500 pages—which is as devoid of psychology as it is full of song titles, advertising slogans, slang and regional reportage. Edna St. Vincent Millay (Wilson's unrequited love) is here, as are Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald, and others, but somehow it all fails to be as diverting as the mere cataloguing of its contents would suggest. Undoubtedly many of the entries would have been cut or polished if Wilson had lived to complete work on the manuscript. As it is, even admirers of the factual Wilson would have to admit that, from the factual point of view, the book is repetitious and often dull —at best a social chronicle of an interesting period in American life written by one of the leading figures in it.

But again, to the reader who values Wilson most for his courageous discharge of what a British colleague, Frank Kermode, has called "the legitimate and exhausting tasks of criticism" Edel's psychological approach will seem exactly right. Edel's attempt is to see through the often flat, often repetitive notes in these notebooks with a double vision, understanding them as the acts of a man for whom making them at all was a gesture of brave defiance in the face of unacknowledged terrors. An entry from Wilson's journal, *Upstate*, suggests that one reason for his delay in bringing out the '20's notebooks was that he both wanted and did not want to go back over those years:

> I can hardly believe, at my age now (he was 72) and so far away from that period, that I really lived through all that and did all the things that I did: Mary Blair, Frances (the Anna of the present volume), Margaret; *Vanity Fair*, the *New Republic*. Some wonderful things to look back on, but also some naive and nasty things that I hate to have to remember.

In the event, Wilson's devotion to the truth prevailed over both his ambivalence and his procrastination. He made the significant decision, should he not live to bring this volume out personally, to bring it out under the direction of Leon Edel. The choice was not dictated by sentiment; the two men were not very close. It was deliberate and therefore an implicit endorsement of Edel's psychological orientation. The Edel introduction is, after all, very like the approach he had taken to another American man of letters, Henry James, and Wilson must have realized it would be this line of country in which Edel would place him.

The Twenties both painfully exposes Wilson's inadequacies of personal response and gives expression to some triumphant overcomings of those inadequacies. In its dogged, careful observation of the way things were, it becomes the document of a man *willing* into life a more compassionate nature for himself than the one he really possessed. Finally, although it is not the harmonious rendering of traumatic experience into art that he undoubtedly longed to give us, it is, as much as was within his power to arrange, the book Wilson wanted us to have.

Cockpit

JERZY KOSINSKI

Houghton Mifflin, $8.95

IVAN SANDERS

Jerzy Kosinski frightens a lot of people. They sense impenetrable evil and an equivocal authorial attitude behind his invitingly simple fictions. Unwilling to ponder the ambiguities, they charge the author with complicity instead. Actually, Kosinski is a fictionist of the first order whose stunning verbal snapshots of violence and terror bespeak restraint, modesty even. The author knows full well that the towering evils of twentieth-century history put the most fervid imagination to shame, so instead of trying to deal with such things as totalitarian terror, racial madness, technological dehumanization in a comprehensive, realist manner, he dwells on minor atrocities, casual cruelties, private aberrations, but in a way that always hints at the historical models inspiring them. His first novel, *The Painted Bird*, was a series of fanciful variations on the basic themes of Nazi inhumanity. In *Steps* we witness an individual's responses first to a harshly repressive, then to a chaotically permissive society. And Chance the gardener in the satiric *Being There* is at once the victim and hero of the electronic age. Kosinski's matter-of-fact articulation of the unspeakable, as well as his singular appreciation of the more elegant forms of physical and mental tortures, suggest to many an obviously anti-humanist sensibility. Yet, his heroes are above all rugged individualists who cope with hostile reality by trying to understand, control, possess experience—verbally, visually, if not always physically.

In this sense Tarden, the hero of Kosinski's latest novel, *Cockpit*, is a

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composite of all his previous characters. Like the protagonist of *Steps*, he is a rootless foreigner who recalls a youth spent in an oppressive Eastern European environment. Some of his more outrageous childhood memories bring to mind episodes from *The Painted Bird*, while his interest in photography, his endless fascination with recorded realities, reveal an affinity with the TV-worshipping hero of *Being There*. But most importantly, Tarden, like Kosinski's other characters, aims for total self-control. In a revealing reminiscence he tells us how shocked he was to discover as a child that wounds healed by themselves, independent of his will. "I hated the sense of an autonomous force in my body, determining what would happen to me." By forever testing the outer limits of his (and others') endurance, he learns to manipulate not only his actions and thoughts, but his reflexes, his very instincts as well. "Since I cannot survive unless I can order every aspect of my existence," he says, "my mind exploits my body."

A former operative of the "Service," Tarden continues to live the elusive, self-sufficient life of an undercover agent, shuttling between continents and electronically-fortified apartments, and devising frightful stunts with which to punish his enemies and reaffirm his own omnipotence. Insisting on absolute freedom for himself, the ex-spy nevertheless needs people if only to validate his freedom. He is thrilled to be able to manipulate others without their knowing it, but his much-cherished sense of inviolability rules out total enjoyment. Kosinski's hero is hungry for all forms of stimulation, but his fear of excessive involvement turns him invariably into a voyeur. Even when he is a full-fledged participant in a physical relationship, he derives greater pleasure from knowing he is in control than from yielding to his sexual impulses. He recalls how he frightened a girlfriend in high school by making her believe he was a sexual cripple. Actually, he had the unique ability to retract his organ and keep it hidden with the aid of a plastic-tipped metal clamp. He urged the girl to excite him just the same and tried himself to avoid having an erection which might snap the clamp. "As long as the clamp remained in place, I felt a bit of pain, but the sense of harnessed power made orgasm crude by comparison." Tarden's unremitting self-control makes him, necessarily, a cold and brutal man, though unexpectedly tender responses reestablish his humanity. Towards the end of the book he relates the bizarre escapades of a pathetic lecher, and then dwells lovingly on the old man's fantasies about living in a clean, serene Swiss village.

It might be naive to treat Tarden as a conventional, realistically conceived character. As in *Steps*, questions of motivation and credibility are beside the point; it's the episodes themselves that are important, the preternaturally sharp images, which intimate darker secrets than they reveal. Ultimately we are made to contemplate not the perversity of a single individual but a world in which systematic intimidation and subversion can be accomplished neatly, tracelessly. When Tarden, as a child, sends scores of people on a wild-goose chase with phony telephone messages; when he terrifies supermarket-shoppers by injecting a chemical into cartons of food; when he has three derelicts gang up on a disloyal girlfriend, it becomes almost irrelevant that he *is* driven by a distorted sense of justice. Our attention is focused on the incidents: the graphic, disturbingly credible details, the mounting suspense, the devastating final revelation.

Of course these episodes could also be viewed as outlandish daydreams, wish-fulfillments, paranoid visions—lucky safety-valves for a perverted imagination. After reading some of the grosser passages, one has the awful feeling he is losing his capacity to be shocked, and then realizes with some annoyance that he has put up with shameless self-indulgence, the kind Philip Roth talks about in his recent collection of essays. In such writing the author glories in all that is "excessive, frivolous, or exhibitionistic." Kosinski is unique in being disciplined about his excesses; his prose is as precise and controlled as his hero. And he does fall back on simple expedients, on man's "natural weapons": his eyes, his memory, though ironically, in his new novel he also suggests the futility of unrelenting vigilance. His hero may remain in the driver's seat, the cockpit (Kosinski no doubt appreciates the varied connotations of the term), but his precautions and elaborate strategies become, after a while, pointless exertions. Tarden's final recollection is of an old disabled tank whose "corroded gun defiantly trains on trenches and machine-gun nests. long buried in the sands of a deserted beach."

A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers

HUGH KENNER

Knopf, $8.95

NATHAN A. SCOTT, JR.

Though one suspects that his standing in the stock market is not nearly so high as that of many others who are by no means his equal, Hugh Kenner is today a marvel of American criticism and one of its few great men. Indeed, apart from Richard Ellmann, no one else has dug so deeply into the classic tradition of twentieth-century modernism; and, at the distant remove at which the young now stand from "the generation of 1914," the best help they can be given towards appropriating the world of Pound and Eliot and Joyce and Wyndham Lews is to be told to rely on Kenner's books as their chief Baedeker. And he will make them so good a guide over this tangled terrain not only because of the extraordinary stretch of his learning but also because he commands a sprightly, civilized tongue which is incapable of that gray, dead

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language normally employed by academic criticism in our time. For more than twenty-five years, in book after book, he has regularly talked about the principal strategists of the modern movement with a most remarkable trenchancy and brilliance and wit, and thus he requires to be thought of now as simply our foremost master of the major Anglo-American insurgencies in the literature of this century.

So it was not at all surprising for me to hear in a small conference three years ago a young scholar express the hope that Hugh Kenner might eventually produce precisely the sort of book he has just now published—on those Americans (Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Stevens, Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore) who came to the fore in the years between the two world wars. But, though one might naturally have wished that Kenner would turn his hand to such a project, it is surely an astonishment that even he should have been able to put together so large a body of fresh commentary on writers whose achievement has been as thoroughly mined as that of the leading American modernists.

He is, however, a critic whose wont it is to brighten up and make new whatever he touches, and of this his latest book makes a fine example, for on page after page after page things are said that haven't been said before, and in a way that clears our view of some of the great books and writers of the age. "Hemingway's morality of style," we are told, is "positively Victorian, for "it derives from the Victorian Underground." Or, again, though Kenner rightly considers Nick Carraway, with his ponderous and overblown *sententiae*, to be something of a bore in *Gatsby*, he reminds us that the knowledge that this skeptical personage "is somewhere around, like a saturnine big brother, helps keep Fitzgerald from talking nonsense." Stevens, he says, "took the dissolution of a Christianity inculcated in Reading, Pa., for the summons to a new humanism, a life's work." And his "eloquence, irresistible to the quoter, is aroused by its own self-sufficient replacement of what one at first supposes it is 'about.' " Marianne Moore's poems,

> *. . . American literature is tricky for the critic. At the same time it exacts his services. Along with their work, its writers invent the criteria by which we must understand them. That is why so much critical writing, some of it good, has been generated around American literature, as though evoked by the novels and poems themselves. Even so apparently simple a writer as Hemingway has attracted a long critical bibliography. He invented a new kind of fiction; it is chiefly in this respect that he resembles a Wallace Stevens, a William Carlos Williams, a Marianne Moore, who resemble one another in having invented new kinds of poems.*
>
> —A Homemade World

he says, he cannot imagine ever having been handwritten, for the words on her pages "are little regular blocks, set apart by spaces, and referrable less to the voice than to the click of the keys and the ratcheting of the carriage." And, though Kenner is a systematic thinker and no mere epigrammatist, the unflagging vivaciousness of his mind makes it natural that he should specialize in the kind of *jeu d'esprit* with which this splendid book is constantly studded.

His essential thesis is set forth in his title, for he is contending that the great American modernists—Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore—were deeply committed to their own native cultural inheritance. As they set about minting a new language that would be adequate to the circumstances of their time, they kept a lively awareness of the international *avant-garde*, but, as Kenner maintains, they found their themes and "hammered out" their poetic amidst "the American weather"—and thus they created "a homemade world." It is not, of course, in its bare essentiality, a startling argument; but the density of anecdote and textual analysis wherewith it is fleshed out give the book its special distinction and make it the most interesting account of its material in recent criticism.

Five Decades: A Selection (Poems 1925-1970)

PABLO NERUDA

Trans. by Ben Belitt

Grove, $12,50, paper $3.95

Trilce

CESAR VALLEJO

Trans. by David Smith

Grossman, $20, paper $5.95

Spain, Take This Cup From Me

CESAR VALLEJO

Trans. by Clayton Eshleman & José Rubia Barcia

Grove, $10, paper $2.95

RONALD CHRIST

What Neruda wrote in his poem "Yesterday"—"those who were lately *nerudarized* are beginning to *vallejolate*"—is even truer today than when he wrote it. Witness: the publication in English this year not only of this major retrospective *Five Decades: A Selection* as well as his most important book *Residence on Earth* but also of Vallejo's primal poetic scream *Trilce* and his brief volume about the Spanish Civil War, *Spain, Take This Cup from Me*.

The two men were contemporaries but the Peruvian died exiled in Paris in 1938 after a calamitously miserable life while the Chilean went on to earn the greatest fame only to die in exile as well—in his own country. Now that they are both dead, the better known, from the platform of his established and deserved fame, still mourns the lesser known who is, however, rapidly becoming a recognized voice and powerful stimulus to poets in this country: in his poem "V.," Neruda writes:

I mourn a dead friend
like myself a good carpenter.
We traveled the streets and plateaus, among battles
and boulders and sorrows together.
How he widened his gaze

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for my sake: a bag-of-bones blazing!
His smile was my bread
till we moved out of range and he hollowed a place in the ground
and they hounded him into it.

That "bag-of-bones blazing" is the Vallejo who incinerates the pages of this too pretty edition of *Trilce*, which tempts your eye with a mellow richness while the poetry grinds its teeth and scrapes your bones with white hot wires, a poetry that moans and howls a wretched inversion of Browning's great comic line "Gr-r-, there go, my heart's abhorrence." In articulating the inarticulate, the painfully non-verbal for comic ends, Browning approached the territory of Vallejo, our greatest poet of pain, who twists grammar, torments syntax, and racks orthography, not for effect—oh, surely not for that—but to wring something like his own misery out of a Spanish that suddenly becomes plastic in his fists whereas its greatest virtue has traditionally been its looping, linear grace. Lines like "I seeck to hittt back right away" and verses like

What do you call everything that us bristles?
The name is Thesame that you put up with
name name name namE

embody this torturing of language by a suffering sensibility expressing even sexual intercourse as a "horrible suture of pleasure." "Trilce" itself is a significantly unintelligible word that we must sense as a hieroglyph of feeling using letters instead of pictures for its realization, like the conclusion of poem XIII:

Oh honeyed scandal of twilights,
Oh mute outcry,
Yrctuoetum!

Here is more than one pound of flesh Vallejo saws from his own flanks with a serrated blade.

Partly inspired by his sense of orphanhood on going home after his mother's death, the desperate nostalgia of *Trilce* is matched by the desperate hope in *Spain, Take This Cup from Me* which was literally written in the press of defeat and printed on soldier's shirts. A futile rallying cry, of Guernica-like lyricism, the book's effect might be replicated by a writer of identical intensity but a more-or-less strict translation leaves you feeling that you've read a sheaf of emotional documents, not a volume of poems. Still, the translators have been faithful, in their fashion, and their text carries none of the fundamental errors marring *Trilce*. Put one way, Vallejo's Spain cannot be translated into English; said another, we need more translations of Vallejo so that the scrupulously strict, like this one, may breath more fully in the plurality of renderings.

On the other hand, we already have many translations of Neruda and if *Five Decades* is a retrospective showcase for the poet, which it clearly and delightfully is, it is also one for the translator. Ben Belitt has been working Neruda's texts for many years now and if he doesn't satisfy every reader of the original—what translator ever does?—he has established an identifiable Neruda in English. I myself have complained in these pages of Belitt's liberties with the text, of what still seems to me the excessively literary voice he sometimes finds for the poet, but reading this volume I have rediscovered that admiring Neruda tremendously, I can still like him—he is large enough for that—and enjoy Belitt's translations too. For Belitt's readings make no claim to definitiveness but some claim to being poems and these selected poems also exist in a pluralistic world—that of the poet's entire *obra*, because unlike Vallejo, whose poetry intensifies a single passion, Neruda develops what he called in the title of one poem "Full Powers."

Here there is none of the blatant politicism Neruda sometimes wrote—although the notorious poem on the United Fruit Company is included—and here there is relatively little of the beautiful obscurity of *Residence on Earth*. Mostly there is a poetry of *things* asserting

The real? It is there,
Never doubt it—the power of the real to augment
and enlarge us, to make our teeth chatter,
still able to write on the card of our hunger
an order of bread and an order of soul for the table.

Reality, for us Westerners, the etymologists remind us, is things (Latin *res* meaning thing is the root of the word) and Neruda is consistently real, in this sense. And so this time through the vast and varied poetry of Neruda I have been most pleased by poems like "Piano," "Elephant," "Horses," and "To the Foot from its Child"—all poems which are truly about those vital, organic things and not, as in so much modern poetry, about the poet's ability to make images from things. One title says it all: "What Can I Say Without Touching the Earth With My Hands?"

With another poet it would be an ignorant disservice to single out such an apparently simple strain in his work; but with Neruda there is so much, one can afford to be prodigal. And, in the same vein, if one remembers that Belitt's are not the only translations—a point he makes, alluding to the "niggardly and possessive" quality of some translators—there is so much of Ne-

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ruda here. Belitt acknowledges that to properly read Neruda you must read him in the whole books he wrote. Still, this selective anthology is a wonderful introduction and if you are coming to Neruda for the first time I recommend it to you as the best. In fact, with *Five Decades* and *Trilce* in English we have the two greatest Latin American poets of their time available in volumes reprinting much of their best work.

Letters of Henry Miller and Wallace Fowlie (1943-1972)

HENRY MILLER AND
WALLACE FOWLIE

Grove Press, $9.50

PHILLIP CORWIN

The computer would never have predicted it. On the one hand, Wallace Fowlie—academic, intellectually disciplined literary critic, serious Catholic, bachelor, a bit of an ascetic; on the other, Henry Miller—anti-academic, creator rather than critic, boastfully and zestfully undisciplined, debunker of organized religion, husband and father more than once, and an Epicurean. Who would have expected a long, warm friendship between these two men?

Yet that is precisely what transpired for more than 30 years, beginning in 1943. And fortunately, since both men were writers, they corresponded frequently during that time, most heavily in the 1940s. Now a selection of their letters is available, along with an introduction by Wallace Fowlie, as well as an essay by him about the French writers who have influenced Miller.

Their correspondence is, in a word, inspiring. It is filled with cordiality, mutual trust and frank affection. Significantly, each one was extremely generous in helping the other in his career, a welcome contrast to much of the pettiness and viciousness that too often characterizes the literary profession.

Their contact began in 1943. Fowlie had just published an essay on the theme of Narcissus for the surrealist magazine *View*. Soon after, he received a letter from Miller praising the article. A correspondence ensued. Then, in 1944, while Fowlie was teaching French literature at Yale, Miller arrived in New Haven and expressed a desire to stay with Fowlie. Fowlie agreed, and from then on their friendship was cemented. A couple of weeks later when Miller left, he took with him Martha Lepska, a graduate student in philosophy at Yale, who became his second wife and the mother of two of his children. In 1945, Miller requested, and Fowlie accepted, that Fowlie become the godfather of Miller's and Lepska's first child, Valentin.

The interests Miller and Fowlie shared were far greater than the differences that seemed to separate them. Both had a passion for French literature and culture, for Paris, for esthetics, and most important, both had a deep spiritual dimension.

It is this spiritual side of Miller that comes through in his long correspondence with Fowlie. Here, for example, is a never-quoted passage from *Tropic of Capricorn* that best characterizes the Miller of these letters:

> One can't make a new heaven and earth with "facts." There are no "facts"—there is only *the fact* that man, every man, every man everywhere in the world, is on his way to ordination. Some men take the long route and some take the short route.

In a similar vein, here are some selections from Miller's correspondence with Fowlie:

> Vision is the thing. The world of the spirit is too vast and deep for mere honesty to be of much value. (March 30, 1944)

> I said I would write you about the life of Jesus *after* the resurrection —the period of forty days, was it, between the resurrection and the ascension. But the more I think about it the more I feel that it is important not to communicate what I think I have learned—a most tremendous truth—but to live my life in the light of it. (Feb. 10, 1946)

And in a more personal way, penned upon leaving Fowlie's apartment in New Haven after his stay there:

> *Vous me donnez le courage de croire et d'aimer.* (original in French) (Oct. 11, 1944)

Finally, twenty years after their first meeting, Miller writes: "You are like a spiritual god-father to me." (August 9, 1965)

Appropriately enough, Fowlie received similar inspiration from Miller:

> The passages on France in the manuscripts you sent me made me weep. I have felt all that, too, but am unable to express it as movingly as you do.
>
> On all these pages which I have read and reread, I have found that strong dedication to art—that made me love you as a writer and as a man from the first time I read you. We meet on the *aesthetic*, and I believe we are one also in our apprehension of the tragedy of man, even if my explanation differs from yours. The important thing is that we feel and participate in the same aesthetic values and the same sense of tragedy. (Jan. 22, 1944)
>
> You have done me much good, you have stirred me to work, to thought, to hope,—that I should like to be able to do something for you. Since the first note you wrote to me, I have not ceased praying for you—because I know that is how I can serve you best. You have a magnificent soul, one which is certainly loved by God. . . . I hope you won't be irritated by this. (Feb. 10, 1944)

Miller was of course not at all irritated by Fowlie's effusive concern. Indeed, he was nourished by it.

Predictably, much of the discussion

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in this correspondence is about literature and literary matters, and as such, it is fascinating. Yet what is most enduring in this epistolary exchange between a distinguished critic and translator of French literature and an irreverent, iconoclastic novelist is the intensity and drama of their personal friendship, so eloquently and frankly revealed. Perhaps the best comment on these letters is the one made by Miller himself when reading them again prior to publication: "What an adventure!"

And, one might add, what a pleasure.

The Transfiguration of Politics

PAUL LEHMANN

Harper & Row, $12.95

Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change

PETER L. BERGER

Basic Books, $10

DAVID S. TOOLAN

> *Our time is full of visions of the future, loudly and arrogantly proclaimed. Moral self-righteousness is evenly distributed throughout the political spectrum. They all tell us so confidently where it's at today and where, if only they have their way, it will be tomorrow. Yet in fact they know so very little, all these self-confident prophets of doom and salvation. It is necessary to cultivate the quiet art of disbelief. It is necessary to act quietly and disbelievingly, out of that compassion which is the only credible motive for any actions to change the world.*—Pyramids of Sacrifice

"What seems to be beyond doubt and belief," Hannah Arendt has written, "is that no historian will ever be able to tell the tale of our century without stringing it 'on the thread of revolutions' . . ." It has not yet appeared what we shall be in this dramatic trial when historians come to score it, but if recent past is prologue, the record may cite us as the leading counterrevolutionary force of the century, and as betraying the passion and promise of our own revolution in the process. And the explanation for this tragic Great Refusal? As Arendt points out, the irony of established revolutions, even when they don't devour their children like the bloodthirsty Quetzalcoatl, is "that nothing threatens the achievements of revolution more dangerously and acutely than the spirit which brought them about." The oppressed simply change places with the oppressor. The problem, an old one in both religion and politics, is to keep alive the promise of the revolutionary spirit, to provide channels by which, in the face of new challenges, each generation may become creator-founders of a *novus ordo saeculorum*. From the biblical perspective which Paul Lehmann's new book applies to the revolutionary theme, the revolution is never finished.

No one will dispute, I think, that our country currently faces a crisis of authority—perhaps the result of an inattentive people, that as Jefferson warned, allows the magistrates (and multinational corporate managers) to become wolves. I shall assume, for the sake of this review, the less obvious proposition that this default of authority, and consequent powerlessness of the people, stems not from malignant public servants, much less from defects in the inspiring mythos to which our Presidents appeal in launching foreign and domestic policy, but from our failure, thus far, to understand the differing contextual problems of imperative and massive social change, and to devise appropriate measures to facilitate such change without intolerable pain and loss of human meaning.

In other words, I am assuming our crisis of authority is, first, linked to the aspirations of the revolutionary Third World for many of the things we have already attained, and secondly, is primarily practical, the problems of gearing our "Manifest Destiny" to the immensely complex issues of global institutional change—problems that stymie the ingenuity of planners in Washington as well as those with the most revolutionary sympathies. Hence, I question the presupposition of Lehmann's major effort to attack the current political crisis by means of a fundamental ideological repair job, in this case a highly erudite (and densely obscure) exploration of the revolutionary bearings of Jesus' politics. Lehmann re-examines the transfiguring politics of Jesus and in this light the transfigured significance of contemporary revolutions (from Marx and Mao to Frantz Fanon and the Black Panthers). The power of Jesus' "presence" in and over human affairs, he argues, will on the one hand save revolution from subverting its own passion for humanization, and on the other, saves the Christian mentality from its addiction to legitimating the status quo.

If, under the gun of texts like Rom. 13 ("Every person must submit to the supreme authorities."), your Christianity allies you politically with established injustice at home and abroad, then Lehmann's re-reading of the revolutionary dimensions of what God is doing in the Jesus-story will indeed prove a therapeutic shaking of the foundations. But if your sympathies are already with the aspirations that make for revolution around the post-colonial globe, and your definition of the problem is that the messianic politics of our "civil religion" wants for programs that in a revolutionary world congruently express it, then for starters in sound ethical decision-making in this area I recom-

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mend Peter L. Berger's attempt to join hard-nosed expertise and utopian imagination in dealing with developmental problems. Berger's book, it is true, is short on the utopian imagination side, long on the social scientist's cautionary notes for would-be messiahs. For all that, it seems to me an example of the "incarnational politics" Lehmann claims to offer, but does not.

The point is I can visualize both hard-nosed capitalists and hard-revolutionaries being guided in their strategy-sessions by Berger's parables and analyses of the scope of developmental issues; ideological purism and innocence receives a sobering de-mythologization in the face of inconvenient facts, both cultural and economic. If we want not merely to speculate, but to change the world, then we're going to have to use our methodical heads as well as our inspired hearts as never before.

Lehmann, on the other hand, leaves my bleeding heart hanging, patiently waiting the totter and fall of oppressive power. In failing to provide a casuistry to bring his principle-talk down to the concrete issues to which his chapters describing contemporary revolutions advert, and thus down to the earth demanding concrete strategies, he throws a burden upon the mythic dimension of our lives which it will not carry. The tale of revolutions and our response to them will be told in tragic terms unless the saving Jesus-story is informed by scientific intelligence and action in ways Lehmann does not attempt. More substantively, he gives us no clue as how, once narrowed and numbed by "modernization" or old fashioned sin, we can re-enact the saving story of Jesus in our lives—no "praxis" such as Friere offers, no "republic of the wards" such as Arendt advocates, let alone a contemporary "ascent of the mind to God" such as we might expect from someone for whom the centering "presence of Jesus" is so critically important. "Presence," like "humanization," remains an unpacked term.

Finally, the model of Jesus silent before Pilate's political obtuseness will not do. Think of us, Lehmann's prosperous American audience. If taken as a request for a moral and realistic policy toward the underdeveloped world or the marginal in our own society, does not the "What is truth," question sound eminently plausible, the logical question of an educated, professional managerial class aware of the enormous complexity of the issues—for which, Berger reminds us, there are no simplistic ideological solutions. Jesus was not confronted by these problems, nor by the military-industrial complex. We have his word, though that children of the kingdom must be "wise as serpents"—outdo the technocrats at their own game. It would help if we had a translation of what Jesus might look like in gray flannel and briefcase, as policy-maker in business and government. Indirectly and modestly, Berger's book assays this.

Berger's venture into political ethics contains sharp critiques of both capitalist and socialist-revolutionary models for Third World development, and then

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proceeds to offer sage advice to both for a pragmatic method of arriving at policy-judgments under the "postulate of ignorance." It is not without its flaws. His critique of Paolo Friere's "consciousness-raising" struck me as misplaced in view of Friere's own awareness of its dangers. And Berger's quest for an American stance ("America can be most significant to the Third World by being itself") assumes that overseas economic problems can be handled without a major overhaul in our own economy. That may well be so, but so far as I understand the scholarly state of the question on this issue, the evidence to support such complacency is not yet all in.

Easy and Hard Ways Out

ROBERT GROSSBACH

Harper's Magazine Press, $7.95

Gone Away

DAVID H. BROOKS

Harper's Magazine Press, $7.95

JOHN DRUSKA

John Grossbach's first novel, *Someone Great*, brought notices comparing it to *Portnoy's Complaint* and *Stern*. Both that first book and his second novel, *Easy and Hard Ways Out*, invite comparison as well with the crazily-logical world of *Catch-22*, and portions of the second echo the concern with bureaucratic tyranny that marks Thomas Pynchon's fiction. But essentially Grossbach's novels aren't all that much like any of these other works. He's less concerned with the supra-normal character or the character in supra-normal circumstances than he is with the everyday demands and off-hand compromises men face. Where his books begin to sound like *Catch-22* they usually lack Heller's honed maniacal edge. And next to *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Easy and Hard Ways Out* looks a little austere and common, like a neighborhood kid who's just grown out of his dreams and the vagaries of his dwarfed world—the el plunging down its trestle at the point it becomes the subway, the loose board under the radiator that conceals dirty pictures. Looks in fact like Schectman of *Someone Great*; sounds in fact like Grossbach, the Bronx native who became an engineer and lives now with wife and son, as Harper's gratuitously tells us, "in a house with a panelled den and many cesspool problems."

That's why I like *Easy and Hard Ways Out*. In spite of its sometimes irritating derivative bluff, it's basically an unpretentious tale about a náif in a morally skewed grown-up world, and about how that world's momentous chicanery dissolves innocence while absolving guilt. The way it's told—some of the chapters sectioned into lettered groups like outlines, some of them punctuated with asinine inter-office memoranda, and the story framed by a couple of colossally myopic news-service items—helps to illustrate, I think, the inherently nutty, mechanical and fatally prosaic qualities of the particular big business Grossbach satirizes.

Unable to meet Air Force test specifications for the Yig filter, a small but crucial part of the new and long-delayed F24BZ war plane, the Auerbach Labs hierarchy fakes data that allow the aircraft to pass inspection and make it to the runways of Vietnam. There, several of the planes develop mysterious and lethal problems. Through occasional glimpses overseas we witness in detail how one of these failures affects a flier named Buchfarer: it kills him. On the home front we watch the F24BZ as it engages the motley crew of Auerbach men, from *A* himself and the upper echelon, down through the ranks, even to an ex-employee who lives secretly in one of the Labs' men's rooms. Among them Grossbach focuses most often on Harvey Brank, a chronically disaffected worker who's gone through a dozen jobs, struggles as an Auerbach engineer to perfect the Yig,

> *"The glue," whispered Steinberg, half choking. "The glue's no good under temperature."*
>
> *"What glue," said Ardway. "What glue are you talking about?"*
>
> *"The glue that holds the spheres onto the rods," gasped Steinberg. "Brank found it. He's the engineer on it. It was his fault. He's trying to fix it. God, it really is warm in here, Mr. Ardway."*
>
> *"That's a stupid problem," said Ardway. "We're working in the forefront of science here, and you can't find some half-assed paste? That's silly. Isn't that silly?" He zinged a fast-ball smile across his lips before collapsing back into his scowl.*
>
> * * *
>
> *. . . they turned with him, drawing closer—slim, vicious, robot cylinders that could not be shaken, terrifyingly fast, twin dots converging on the center of his radar screen. He put the aircraft into a dive and yelled into the intercom. ...."Kinny, did you actuate your break-lock? Kinny!"*
>
> *Inside the metal container that held the electronic countermeasures gear, inside a separate aluminum chassis, a microscopic polished black sphere, having fallen off its mounting rod, rolled freely in a small stainless steel cavity.*
>
> *"Not working!" shouted Kinsella.*
>
> *Almost subliminally then, Buchfarer perceived the tiny black clouds of exploding anti-aircraft shells, quiet, deadly* pffs *seen in watery slow motion off to one side. Eighty-five millimeter he recorded distantly, and one second afterward a jagged, exploding chunk of white-hot metal tore him neatly in half, just below the waist.*
>
> —Easy and Hard Ways Out

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and finally tries to blow the whistle on it.

Brank, like Grossbach's first protagonist, Schectman, isn't as histrionic as a Portnoy, Yossarian, or a Stern. Grossbach's characters, major and many of the minor, are men nurtured on above-average expectations whom the machines of normality—family, school, job, new family, and the quest for a good lay—have turned into average failures. Beneath the frequently Hellerish narrative pitch, which annoys at times because here it sounds banal, Grossbach discloses a stoic undertone that, combined with his broadly social point-of-view, reminds me more of a novelist like Harvey Swados, who began writing out of and against the normality of the '40s and '50s in his own realistic manner, than of the absurdo-realist masters who were growing through fiction at about the same time.

Especially in *Easy and Hard Ways Out*, where he traces the implicated lives of the Lab characters and the mindless regimentation of their works and days, Grossbach appears less interested in the idiosyncrasies of his lead character or in black-comic narrative extremes than he is in a sort of modest quotidian absurdity: the trivial reality of the societies his characters shape and/or serve, the cultural modes that designate their relationships and roles, and the way they exist (often barely and by zany means) within or without these terms. While Schectman's plight dominates *Someone Great*, Buchfarer, however brief his appearances, becomes nearly as important as Brank in the course of *Easy and Hard Ways Out*; and characters like the brainy-lunatic Brundage periodically take center stage to play major thematic roles—in his case through an incredibly frustrated affair in which he misses a longed-for tryst after forgetting his girlfriend's address, and literally drives himself crazy.

By creating the reality of a coherently daffy everyday world and by letting his story naturally reach its ironic matter-of-fact ending (Brank in limbo after an aborted revolt, Auerbach Labs awarded with a "two-million-dollar follow-on contract . . . to 'trouble-shoot, update and improve' the electronic countermeasures system on the currently grounded F24BZ fighter plane") Grossbach achieves a sense of narrative completion that his characters and stories seem to require. Although *Easy and Hard Ways Out* lacks some of the comic spontaneity of *Someone Great*, I think it surpasses the latter book in this regard. When Schectman "went" near the end of *Someone Great*, I could see Grossbach's point—Schectman's need to extricate himself from his past —but I couldn't help wondering, wanting to know more about his going; and couldn't help thinking of his exit as an arbitrary narrative act. Grossbach lets Schectman take an easy way out. In *Easy and Hard Ways Out*, ease can be purchased, but only at the cost of one's conscience or one's life; and the ending, which perhaps intersects with the start of another baffling cycle of human ineptitude, makes this clear and makes us, if we assent to the book at all, take the hard and conclusive way out.

Other authors, whose novels come to even more conventional ends, hardly approach Grossbach's feel for organic narrative. David H. Brooks is one of these; like many of his fellows he pretends to bring a story to life while he manipulates the lifeless contents of his book. About all he has in common with Grossbach is his publisher.

Gone Away, Brooks's first novel, records a critical period in the history of a well-to-do Connecticut family, four people high on their old farmhouse home, horses, and (off-and-on) each other. The younger of two sons narrates a story in which "the Old Man" is featured as an aloof, suffering patriarch, battling the forces of cultural decay, chasing his older son from the house because of a car theft that led to expulsion from school, and soon after losing his wife to the attractions of self-liberation. After an obligatory period of mild decline, the Old Man wins back his old lady with the help of a horse-and-carriage escort home in a perverse scene that places the sexual ethos of this novel squarely in the pre-*Pamela* 18th century. Later, in an equally repugnant strike scene, a horde of stereotypes, including his radical Black preppy girlfriend, clear the way for the prodigal son's last test of manhood and return to the fold. I'd say more about these scenes, and others, but I'm afraid doing so might make you think they're worth reading.

Brooks's narrative manner is just as forgettable. There's a pseudo-Salinger-Roth ploy that leads us to think the speaker might be readying himself for psychiatric care, but this turns out sounding more like a teaser, part of the act—that is, part of another ploy, which is the narrator's fantasy that all the family's adventures are episodes in a carefully-scripted TV serial. So the book ends: "Click!"

Using the younger son as narrator is certainly a masterstroke. It lets Brooks mask the shallowness and rhythmic flaws of his storytelling with the boy's narrative peccadilloes. But even the youth's hip monologue is hard

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to sustain at times, as when the older brother faces "Greaser," a fearsome union-goon, and the younger brother quotes himself asking the Old Man a rather outré question: "Why forsake him now?"

Neither narrative credibility nor the characters really matter here, of course. This is clearly a book whose author wants so much to attach metaphoric clout to his characters' actions that he can't afford to have any human beings get in the way. So he moves his characters around like counters in a landscape full of the sporting life—fox-hunts, football, polo, soccer—and in an atmosphere redolent of crisp green machismo Brooks labors to bring forth his leaden lessons of . . . of what? Tradition? Manliness? Evasive actions for would-be writers of relevant novels?

Maybe the bizarre insensibility of *Gone Away* can be explained best by a glib hint that Harper's drops on the book's jacket. "It was on the New Haven Line of the Penn Central Railroad," a note duly tells us, "that Mr. Brooks wrote this book, his first novel." It might have profited from some rewriting on the subway.

Loss and Change

PETER MARRIS

Pantheon, $7.95

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Peter Marris is at his best when he is least self-consciously "scientific." His discussions of the human loss and bereavement surrounding death, the severe social disruption of slum clearance, or the destruction of traditional tribal ways of life are sensitive and convincing. The strong point of his analysis is his insistent comprehension —often lost sight of by contemporary social scientists—that an individual's structure of meaning is imbedded in social relationships which are, in turn, integrally tied to a certain way of life. He laments the "bleak rationality" of an age which denies the importance of death and disallows bereaved individuals the healing dignity of acts of mourning. He condemns those who believe social problems can be solved by such physical means as tearing down slums as if slums were just dilapidated buildings rather than neighborhoods. He empathizes with the predicament of uprooted Nigerian villagers thrust into alien urban social environments.

Unfortunately, Marris wants to do more than etch instances of human loss and change in sensitive prose. He is determined to create a theory of loss and bereavement in the hope of influencing the "way we manage social changes." How does one set about "managing" change? What would be necessary? The answer, of course, is prediction—uncovering the *laws* which presumably govern human society so that one can predict individual behavior and chart the "course of events." Marris states:

> Just as, in the prediction of physical events, mastery of the environment rests on abstracting regularities from unique events, so social survival rests on holding to laws of human behaviour which a man or woman may apply wherever they find themselves.

Marris' understanding of scientific predictability (abstracting regularity from unique events) is rather remarkable given his later appreciative discussion of Thomas Kuhn's concept of a scientific paradigm. Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, argued that paradigms, or controlling concepts and theories, authoritatively indicate the solutions to scientific problems as well as the *kinds* of problems requiring solutions. The scientist, argues Kuhn, does not look out at the world, isolate congeries of "particular events," and then go on to abstract an underlying law—quite the opposite. The paradigm sets the frame within which certain phenomena provide solutions to problems set by the paradigm itself.

Marris, however, insists that he has been driven to his conclusions, his "laws" of human society and behavior, through an abstraction of some "common core" from his case studies. These "laws," moreover, are presumed to apply cross-culturally. But the cases Marris cites speak to us as they do because Marris begins with a set of assumptions—a perspective which allows him to focus on certain processes and events and to underplay or ignore others. "Truth" or "falsity" is not the issue as one confronts social theories. Instead one must ask of any social theorist's work: what gets *assumed* in this perspective which would be a problem to be *explained* in another? Rather than being propelled ineluctably to his articulation of scientific "laws," Marris' assumptions about individuals and societies lead him to seek out and to label in a particular way those phenomena which will most convincingly make his case.

His argument hinges on a theory of human nature and on the presumed predictability of social events. Marris' language provides a key to his assumptions. Scattered throughout the book are words like "stress, manage, reintegrate, adapt, respond, threaten, disturb, frustrate, react, confuse, tensions, incoherence, instability." Individuals are anxious and self-interested, driven by a "deep-rooted and insistent need for continuity" which Marris terms the "conservative impulse." This impulse, which has as its aim the defense of "the predictability of life" is a "fundamental and universal principle of human psychology." People are propelled to control their social world which is, at best, a threatening place, fraught with the danger of disorientation.

Although Marris' argument depends on the existence of a universal "impulse," he never explores the nature of an impulse. Is it innate? Conscious or unconscious? Does it act more as a drive or a motivation? Impulse is understood in ordinary usage as an impelling or driving forward, an incitement to action which may arise from a "state of mind" or an external catalyst. The deployment of the term to cover human behavior implies action *without* conscious thought. To speak of people acting from impulse is to largely omit human intentions, motivations, and purposes from one's analysis.

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There is no room in Marris' concept of human nature for critical thought, for action motivated by political or moral ends, for the possibility of collective efforts aimed at shared social goals. His people are fearful creatures driven to seek "release" for the frustrations which emerge when social boundaries are not clearly drawn.

Marris stretches his conservative impulse to cover innovation, rebellion, and revolution: all are its products. He plugs in the arrangement of social institutions long enough to urge that the frustrations which generate movements for change can be traced to the "reaction" of certain individuals to "underlying tensions in society." These tensions, in turn, reflect "confusions of purpose" and "incoherence." Marris' reductionistic scheme of things disallows for the possibility of the transformative power of concepts and ideas. He mentions "injustice, inequality, exploitation" in passing so that he can go on to argue that critics of unjust societies are not "necessarily" impelled "to seek radical changes." This is most assuredly the case—but why?

The answer is, not as Marris would have it, that revolutionary analysis must convincingly promise "absolute meaning" and a quick restoration of "predictability" to human life and affairs before a majority flock to its banners; rather, structures of oppression exert constraints upon the life chances and choices of individuals, including the possibility for critical thought itself.

What for Marris serves as evidence of a "universal impulse" becomes for a theorist devoted to social reconstruction an indication of the manner in which individuals actively seek to make sense of their lives as they confront personal loss, bureaucratic disdain, or the destruction of their history and tradition. There are no impulses here, no innate drives linked to "laws of search for meaning grounded in the human society." There is, however, a capacity of human beings to think about themselves and their world, to act from motivations and principles, and, in the process, to shape the nature and meaning of that world.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 355)

far more appropriate to let people preserve what is valid in their Englishness, Frenchness, etc., than to build more superpowers, with their overweaning arrogance. Schall's prescriptions are for a world which is perhaps passed—and a good thing too!

C. JOHN SULLIVAN

Unpublished Auden?

New Haven, Conn.

To the Editors: Stephen Spender's remark, reported recently in *Commonweal* [Michael Newman's "Age Before Beauty," 8/1/75], that only half of W. H. Auden's work has been published, is wildly incorrect. (It may simply, of course, be a misquotation arising from a newspaper reporter.) Except for juvenilia, only a very few of Auden's poems remain unpublished. If printed, they would hardly fill three pages. All the "last" poems of Auden's last two years appeared in *Thank You, Fog*. The few other unpublished poems will appear in due course in a collected edition of Auden's work—which will also include three or four unpublished essays, some radio scripts and the libretto *Paul Bunyan* as the only other previously unprinted writings.

EDWARD MENDELSON
Literary Executor of the
Estate of W. H. Auden

Reply

The newspaper reporter indicted by Mr. Mendelson would be Thomas Lask, who in an article in the April 29, 1975 *New York Times* quoted Stephen Spender as saying "It will be a long time before people get the measure of Auden. Half of his work remains to be published."

Mr. Lask confirms that Mr. Spender did indeed say this, that the article went unchallenged—adding that "we're happy Mr. Mendelson has made this declaration."

So it appears that the unpublished Auden which hasn't been "burnt" constitutes somewhere between three and 300 pages, and that this dispute is in fact between Mendelson and Stephen Spender.

Unmentioned as yet, of course, remain what Auden called his "queer" poems, which he told me would be published posthumously; I saw several, during my six years' study with him, and imagine that Spender saw many more.

MICHAEL NEWMAN

Correction

The quote at the beginning of Michael Newman's Aug. 1 article, "Age Before Beauty," belonged beneath the illustration appearing on page 311.

Picture and quote were intended to reinforce the author's contention "that Auden's poems work like that machine. . . . Auden's own words seem to have been dropped out of that machine, which resembles a linotype machine."

"One major point of the whole broadside," Newman writes, "is that the medium *is* the massage; and I think with that quote under this picture, that point is made devastatingly by the voice of Auden; and *opera*tically speaking, this *was* the point where my voice was intended to break into his."

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